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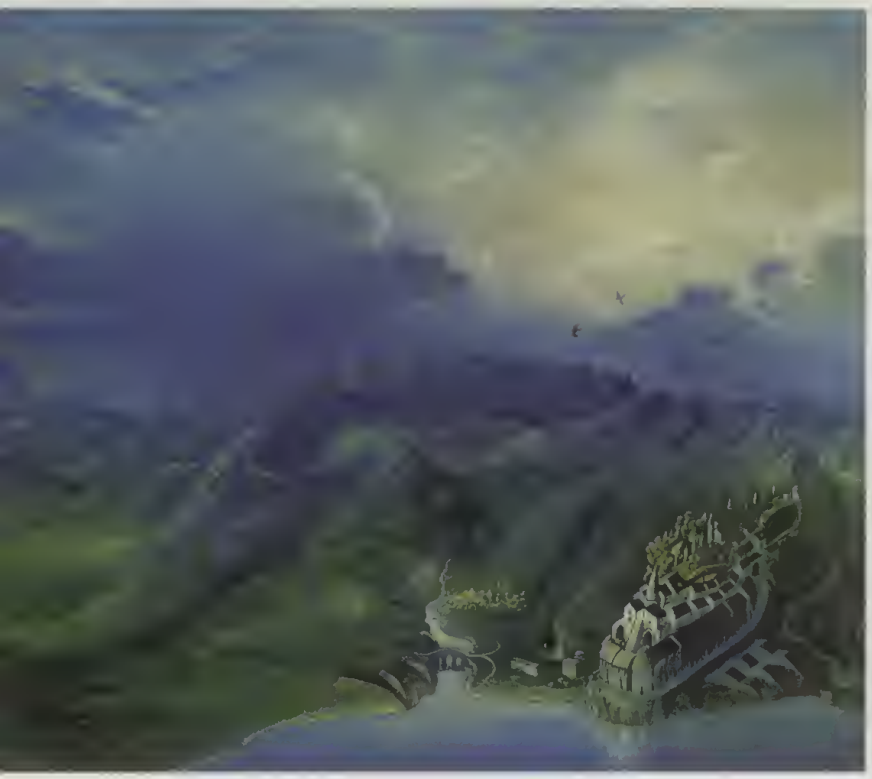
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ABOVE: Kinuko Craft teaches us that, now and again, it is wise to look at the big picture. For more wisdom, pay a visit to the Gallery on page 66. COVER: Step aside, Conan! Move over, Red Sonja! Brom's Dominator *can outmuscle even the heaviest of heavyweights. (Illustration by Brom © 1999 TSR, Inc.)*

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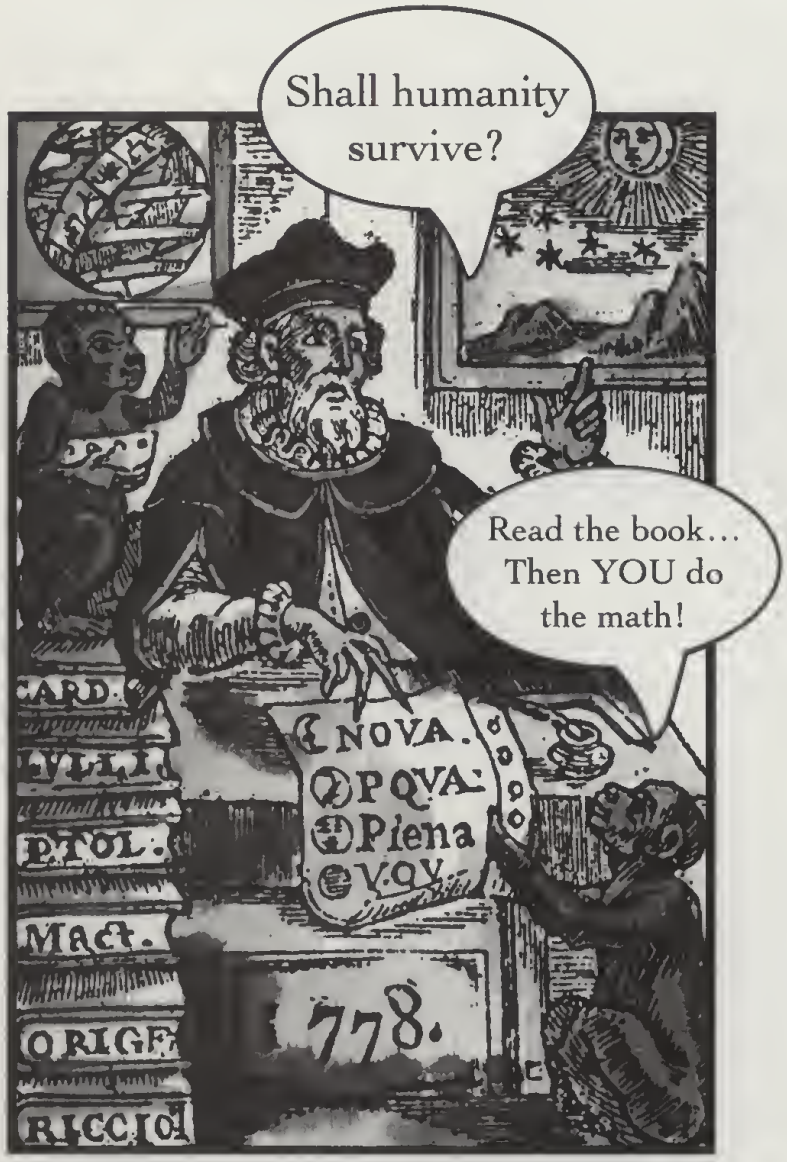
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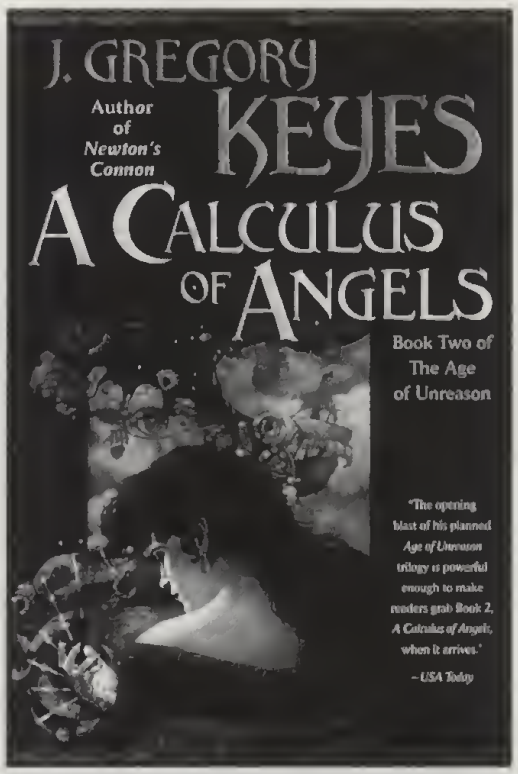
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Q. Who is Sir Isaac Newton?

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Those Who Can—Do, Those Who Can't ... Read.

I'M EITHER THE MOST HATED PERSON working at *Realms*, or the most misunderstood. Yes, I am the one who gets the first crack at all manuscripts and determines if they survive the preliminary cut or are relegated to the blue rejection slip pile. Stories making it through the first read are passed on to the higher power (i.e. Shawna) and from there, all final and best selections are made.

I know, rejection hurts. I am a failed writer. Or rather a writer who no longer writes. I am a writer who decided I made a better reader. In other words, a realist. I have been a poetry writer, a short story writer, a technical writer (paid position), and a novel-that-never-saw-the-light-of-day writer. I have been to writers' groups, obtained a college degree in Creative Writing, own a well-worn copy or two of *Writer's Digest* and have even published a few sports articles in magazines such as *Triathlete, Bicycling* and *Nautilus*. Oh yeah, and one really great letter to the editorial page of the local newspaper. I have received my share of rejection slips from *Mademoiselle* and publications like *Redbook* and *Yankee* magazine. I confess to being even pie-in-the-sky crazy enough to send something to the *New Yorker* once.

For those of you who have accused me of being "hopelessly ignorant," stupid and "green," or just plain blind for failing to notice that your great masterpiece is indeed a great masterpiece ... well, let me tell you a bit more about the person who takes that first glance at your work, who holds the fate of your story in my much-maligned hands. I have been reading manuscripts at *Realms* for almost five years now. Prior to that I worked as a technical writer and editor at a legal publishing firm. The highlight of that job being that my boss thought my letter-writing was so wonderful he had me ghost all his legal correspondence. Going back even further than that, I majored in English at the University of Maine where we often saw Stephen King strolling down the halls past the poems of his "dark man" that were displayed behind glass.

Can I tell you what I have learned about myself and about writers in general while working here at *Realms*? I have discovered first and foremost that I am a glutton for reading. I don't think there has been a week in the past 15 years or so that I haven't finished at least three novels, read the daily paper from cover to cover and also the five or so magazines I subscribe to on top of those picked up on a whim at the newsstand.

As for what I have learned about the writers who send their works to us ... First of all, a presentable manuscript really does make a difference to my bleary eyes. In my first week at *Realms* I thought Shawna was terribly strict because she refused to read a really good story I handed to her single-spaced on bright blue paper. Now I know better. And most importantly I have learned this: Take a fetching red-haired princess/wench, sit her down in a tavern teeming with off-duty warriors, mention that tankard of ale and an unsheathed sword or two—put this in the hands of a bad writer and the tale elicits a very big yawn. Put it in the hands of a REAL writer and it elicits a similar lack of oxygen—although this time it takes my breath away. Why exactly? I can't give you specifics. I don't want to rant on about plot and character and the importance of language. When faced with a real writer, novice or pro, you can feel it in your bones.

So, you may well ask, what does my personal litany of literary failure and literary enlightenment reveal to the readers and hopeful writers of *Realms* about the person who gathers and gleans their own precious work? Oddly enough it means that when I sit down at my desk to face the daunting and precarious pile of manuscripts stacked before me, armed with a cup of coffee and a sigh—it means I actually LIKE to wade through that pile. I find it terribly encouraging to see that there are so many people out there who WANT to be writers whether or not they actually are. I love to read. I read well, I read fast, and I have no qualms about hurting anyone's feelings. Because those of you who will truly be writers will find a way. Maybe not in this particular publication—but somewhere, sometime. I am convinced of this.

And for those of US who are not gifted enough, who may have lost the muse, who just can't make those damned words "sing" the way they should—maybe WE need to sit back and let the REAL writers tell us a story.

Rebecca McCabe

REALMS OF FANTASY

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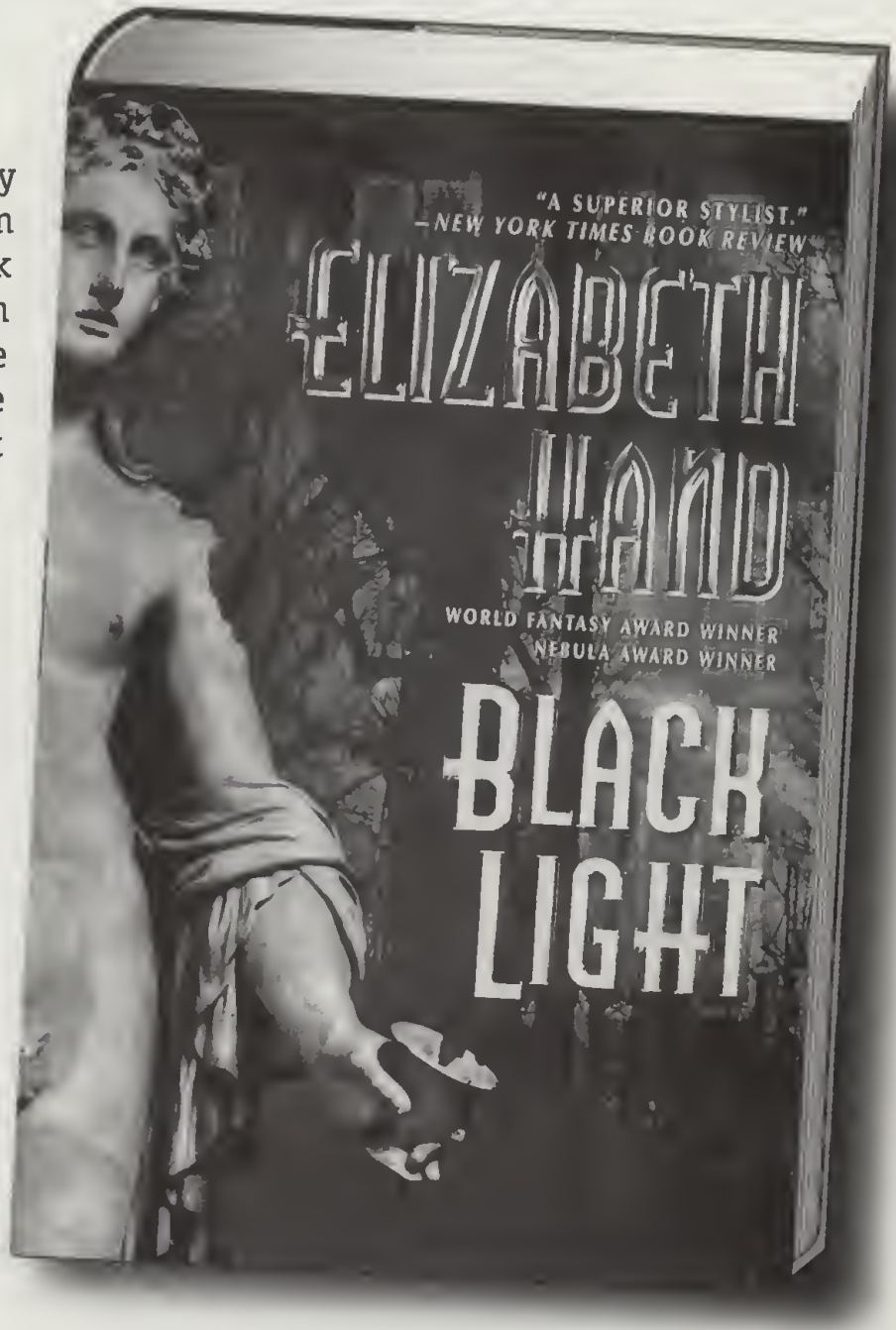
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Dear Mrs. McCarthy,

Oh, I am trying to keep this short and sweet, but I guess you'll like to hear that your magazine is a beaut! Whether or not I like a particular story is beside the point—they are all quite impressive and stay with me for a long time. It's also a treat to read Gahan Wilson's high-quality book reviews. "Folkroots" is just what I am looking for, and you can introduce me to fantasy artists anytime you'd like! "Television" and "Games" both keep me informed about the "state-of-the-art" in the States . . . well, I mostly gobble it up from front page to back page. (As a European, I tend to chuckle at some of the ads though.) Something else I don't want to neglect to mention is the design and the layout . . . it is a treat to touch the paper even!

Ruth Vogelgesang

Dear Ms. McCarthy;

The articles are great and you are the only magazine on the market today like this! It is a wonderful forum for those of us who love dragons, fantasy, and all the rest.

The other reason I'm writing is to ask for your help. I bought a copy of your magazine in 1998 and there was a print advertised for sale by artist Monte Michael Moore (I think). The picture is of a woman with batlike wings standing over a very placid dragon, (she is wearing high heeled shoes and garter panty hose ...) Now the problem is that I loved the picture so much that I took it to a tattoo artist to personalize it for me and then I had the piece tattooed on my lower calf. But the tattoo artist kept the magazine! He then claimed he lost it. I would love to get a copy of the original advertisement if I could, can you help me out? I loved this artist's work and want to purchase the print. Thank you for your time and keep up the great work with *ROF.*

Rhonda Haley

Despite my vast knowledge of practically every aspect of Realms, *I can't recall this particular advertisement from 1998. My advice to Rhonda, and other readers searching for particular back issues . . . please contact the Circulation Dept. for* Realms *at 800-219-1187.*

Dear Ms. McCarthy,

First the bad news. I believe those who complain that *ROF* contains too much in the way of "literature" have a point even if they are not expressing it properly. I think what they hate is pseudo-literature of the kind so prevalent in nearly any field of fiction today.

The most recent issue (February 1999) is a prime example of where *ROF* sometimes goes wrong. While I have always liked William R. Eakin's "Redgunk" stories, "Dragon of Conspiracy" was not one of them. It was overlong, with convoluted sentences and not a single sympathetic character.

David Biscoff's "A Ghost of a Chance" was not a short story at all. It was a vignette at best. Again, not a single sympathetic character, a pointless ending, and a lack of action. It was more an exercise in how many times Bischoff could say the "F" word than anything else.

Derryl Muphy's "Northwest Passage" might have been a good story had it not been written in the present tense. I know the intent of the present tense is to give the story immediacy, but it has the opposite effect. I know damned well the story is not happening as I read it. Present tense is the height of pseudo-literary writing and has no place in the real world.

When *ROF* does it right, it does it better than anyone. I have decided to keep on with my subscription for just that reason. The Patrick Weekes story "Dragons and Other Extinctions" and Darrell Schweitzer's tale "Bitter Chivalry" are prime examples of really good stories. Hardly happy stories with happy endings, but nevertheless real, logical, and satisfying conclusions. And these both had sympathetic characters that lived on after the story ended.

In the past, fiction by Tanith Lee, Peni R. Griffin, Leslie What, Jane Yolen, Richard Parks, and Robert Silverberg has provided me with hours and hours of pleasurable reading. Silverberg's "The Church at Mont Saturno" was as powerful a story as I have ever read, and definitely LITERATURE. It still affects me at the most unexpected moments.

I understand the need to be varied and eclectic, as you put it, but not at the expense of all good fiction. I hope that you take my criticism in the spirit I intended it; namely, to help, in some tiny way, to preserve what has the promise of being the best fantasy magazine of all time.

James D. Ireland

Dear Editor,

I'd like to add my voice to Jason L. Blair's. (Letters, April 99). I'm no fan of generic fantasy but am always keen to find stories by good, individual writers. I subscribe to *Realms of Fantasy* in spite of the generic covers precisely because it doesn't publish the usual common denomitor stuff. The cover's a reasonable marketing decision. The stories, thank goodness, are not bought according to market considerations. The editorial standard's high, the tastes are broad. Surely that's what you want from a magazine? If you're really addicted to the mixture as before, there are thousands of versions of it out there for you already. It's magazines like yours which first published Howard, Leiber, me and most of the other writers whose work went to create those current genre conventions. In those days people frequently complained that our stories were to off-beat. They seemed upset that they weren't what they'd expected . . . The *Realms* team are doing a great job, helping find the great imaginative writers of tomorrow, and I wish them every success.

Best wishes,
Michael Moorcock

To Shawna McCarthy:

Every issue, one of the first things I read in *ROF* are the letters to the editor. I must say I am disappointed that so many of the people who challenge the content of the stories in your magazine are belittled and degraded by you for voicing their opinions in the hope that some things might change. After all, why pay for a magazine if you cannot even write what you would like differently as a reader—without expecting to get "knocked around" for your views?

I think most of the stories are "dark," not even fantasy at all. They are more like modern-day fiction. What happened to the magic and wizards, dragons and elves, good vs. evil—but seen through a "light lens?"

Dawn Coatney

Well, Dawn, your letter rather floored me for just a moment. I feel compelled to defend myself here. I do not believe I have ever belittled or degraded anyone writing to me with a legitimate letter and/or point. I welcome everyone's opinions and I am the one who decides to publish particular letters, even when they expressly criticize or do not flatter the magazine. I think you are confused by the fact that sometimes I like to poke fun at the letter writer who threatens us with canceling a subscription because we are not publishing a magazine that expressly reflects his/her own personal tastes or beliefs. I also have been known to take a shot or two at the person(s) who might be complaining that our magazine is too literary for them—and this I cannot resist, because while they think they are insulting us, coming from someone of that mind-set, it is actually a compliment! You can tell us we are too literary any day of the week! Thank you, in fact.

While I can appreciate that you have your own personal tastes — our magazine cannot possibly make all of the people happy all of the time. In the meantime, all letters are welcome and if any of you feel I have belittled your opinions or degraded you in this international publication—let me know!

Correction to the February issue: Mark Wagner's Web Site was printed incorrectly. You can reach his Web Site at www.heartsandbones.com.

Your comments are welcome. Send them to: Letters to the Editor, Realms of Fantasy, *P.O. Box 527, Rumson, NJ 07760. Or better yet, E-mail to: shawnam896@aol.com*

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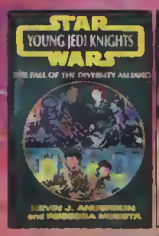
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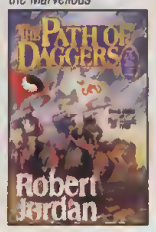
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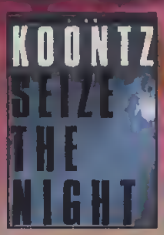
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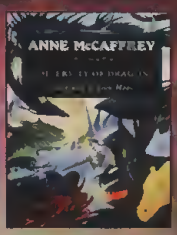
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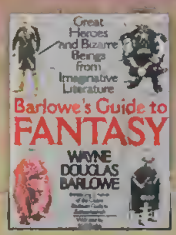


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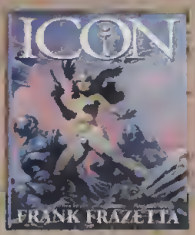
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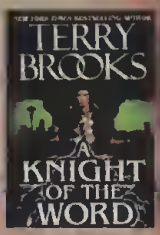
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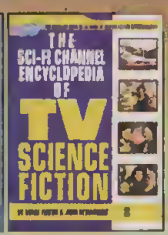
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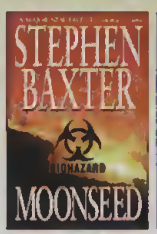
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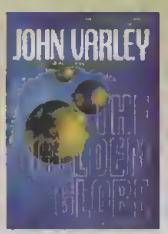
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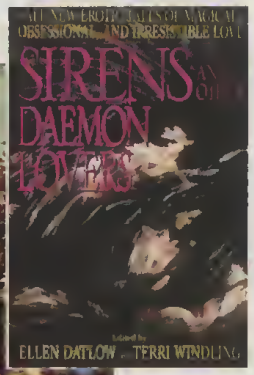
Sirens *sings*, The Tooth Fairy *grins* *and Barlowe vacations in Hell.*

IF YOU ARE EVEN REASONABLY WELL READ IN REALMS OF FANTASY (DOES THAT last phrase have an oddly familiar ring?), when you note that *Sirens and other Demon Lovers* is edited by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling you will at once be certain that the book is sure to be well and carefully built, that it will contain a widely ranging selection of excellent stories, and that the Introduction (introductions in the case of their remarkable annual *Year's Best Fantasy and Horror*) is not only *not* to be skipped (the best course in most anthologies, to be honest) but should be carefully read and mulled upon, for it will surely contain much valuable insight together with large quantities of odd bits of information sure to impress your friends and loved ones.

The foreword to *Sirens* (HarperPrism; NYC; 302 pp.; trade paperback; $14.00) is by Windling and it's not only crammed with numerous stimulating insights but is packed with juicy factoids. Did you know, for example, that Eros (mostly bowdlerized these days into the doughy little cupid of greeting card fame) has a decidedly sinister brother named Anteros who punishes those unkind enough to reject the love inspired by Eros's golden arrows? That you are expected to wet your finger and stroke the vulvas of carven female figures decorating the doorways of many shrines in India and that centuries of this holy practice have produced deep, smooth holes in their stone? May I be so bold as to suggest that some interesting developments might occur if you and your special companion found yourselves perusing this informative, notion-provoking document some quiet evening in the near future?

Enter into a realm that time forgot but Orson Scott Card allows us to remember with Enchantment. *(Cover illustration by Greg Spalenka.)*





At this moment, paging through the book for the purposes of writing this review, I think my favorite may well be Joyce Carol Oates' "Broken Heart Blues," a neat little fable describing the impact of the invasion of a quiet upstate New York town by a fetching young (or perhaps old beyond comprehension) satyr named John Reddy on the females of that town and their hopelessly outclassed males, but if I'd written this column last Tuesday it's possible I might have considered the prize winner to be Pat Murphy's "Attachments," a fiendishly clever turn on the overall theme of the book, relating it to the truly strange true tale of P.T. Barnum's original Siamese twins; then, supposing I'd put the job of writing all of this off until tomorrow, I could well have chosen Brian Stableford's "O for a Fiery Gloom and Thee," a lovely story of doomish faerie love which has tucked within it a tiny essay on the old roads of England that haunts me like an old sweet song. Probably best if you decide for yourself which story's best. They're all fine stuff. And don't forget to read that Introduction.

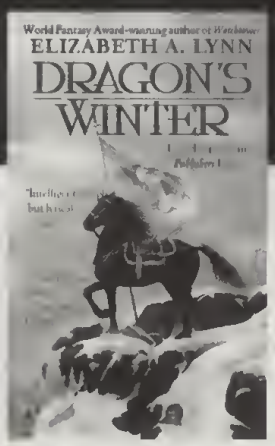
The Tooth Fairy (by Graham Joyce; Tor Books; NY; 320 pp.; hardcover; $22.95) is an excellent fantasy based on the cumbersome clumsiness with which we all grow ourselves up. Its tripart mood—sinister/hilarious/gently forgiving—is solidly established right at the start when the peaceful idyll of three young boys gathered around a country pond is rudely and abruptly shattered by a large pike swimming into view and biting off two toes from one of the youngsters' feet.

The children survive the pike-and-toes incident, though the memory of it never leaves them, and one of them punches another in his mouth hard enough to knock out a milk incisor due to a silly argument, feels

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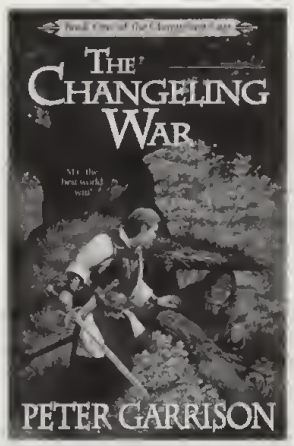


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awful about it, and brings up the old Tooth Fairy legend to make up for his misdeed.

Sam, the tooth loser and our main point-of-view character, is actually visited by the Tooth Fairy, who turns out to be dark and to smell of grass after rain, horse's sweat, birdshit, and camomile. It also uses the word "fuck" easily and wears green and mustard striped pants and industrial-style boots.

It becomes increasingly clear to Sam and his friends that they are the sort of children who are viewed as odd by the general population, so odd, that their elders come to the conclusion it would be a good thing to have them checked out now and then by priests, psychologists, and other recognized steerers of the young mind into appropriate directions. In recognition of this state of affairs they come to call themselves the Heads Looked at Boys.

During the early phases of the analysis, when Skelton (Sam's beleaguered psychiatrist) is in relatively good shape, he sniffs out Sam's continuing involvement with the Tooth Fairy and sensibly sets out to end it by various ploys, the most direct and potentially effective of which is to give Sam an imaginary gun and instruct him to shoot the fairy in the head with it upon his next encounter with the sprite.

One reason Sam does not do this is because the Fairy's femininity has become extremely effective. She has given him his first ejaculation, a beaut, and that was just for starters.

Also, in ways I will not go into lest I spoil the many surprises and very funny jokes embedded within, the Fairy has become more and more deeply involved in helping Sam deal with many problems society is presenting him with as he blunders on through life, including bullies, Boy Scout troops, and the local constabulary.



The Tooth Fairy is not only a very touching and often hilarious work, it is also, I think, one which is highly important for Fantasy in general because in producing it Graham Joyce has subtly but visibly raised the barrier so far as tales concerning growing children's encounters with the strange and wonderful are concerned.

He's brought a new richness to the notion and clearly demonstrates an expansion of possibilities in the form. For this reason, though I strongly recommend it to one and all as a really marvelous book, I most particularly suggest it be essential reading for anyone who writes this sort of book.

Not having a photographic memory I can't say for sure, but it is my strong impression that every list I've seen compiled by writers of the fantastic which cite the authors they consider to be the absolute best in their field is either headed by or very prominently features the name of Algernon Blackwood.

In his lifetime (which is, of course, the only period that really matters to any writer!) he was very successful, producing one best-selling book after another and rounding off his career as a beloved commentator and a reader of his tales on BBC radio. He even managed to make his marvelously gaunt face a fixture in the early days of British TV.

I suppose a major reason for this is that the stories are told in a manner apparently challenging to a large number of the contemporary public in that they employ a sizable vocabulary, build leisurely rather than rush headlong into the various stages of their development, and assume a reasonably long span of attention on the part of their readers.

Another drawback to these stories, probably the most serious, is that lurking behind the action of the bulk of them there is an idea or even an interrelated series of ideas which must be thought over and even actually grasped and digested if the full effect of the tale is to be enjoyed in its entirety.

If the reader is capable of handling these numerous hurdles he or she will find ***The Complete John Silence Stories*** (by Algernon Blackwood, edited with an Introduction by

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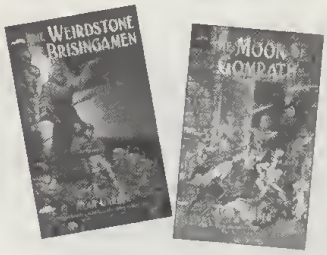


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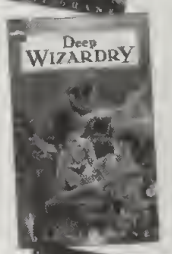
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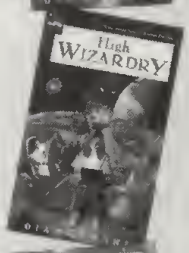
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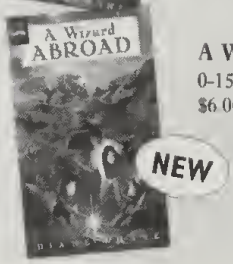
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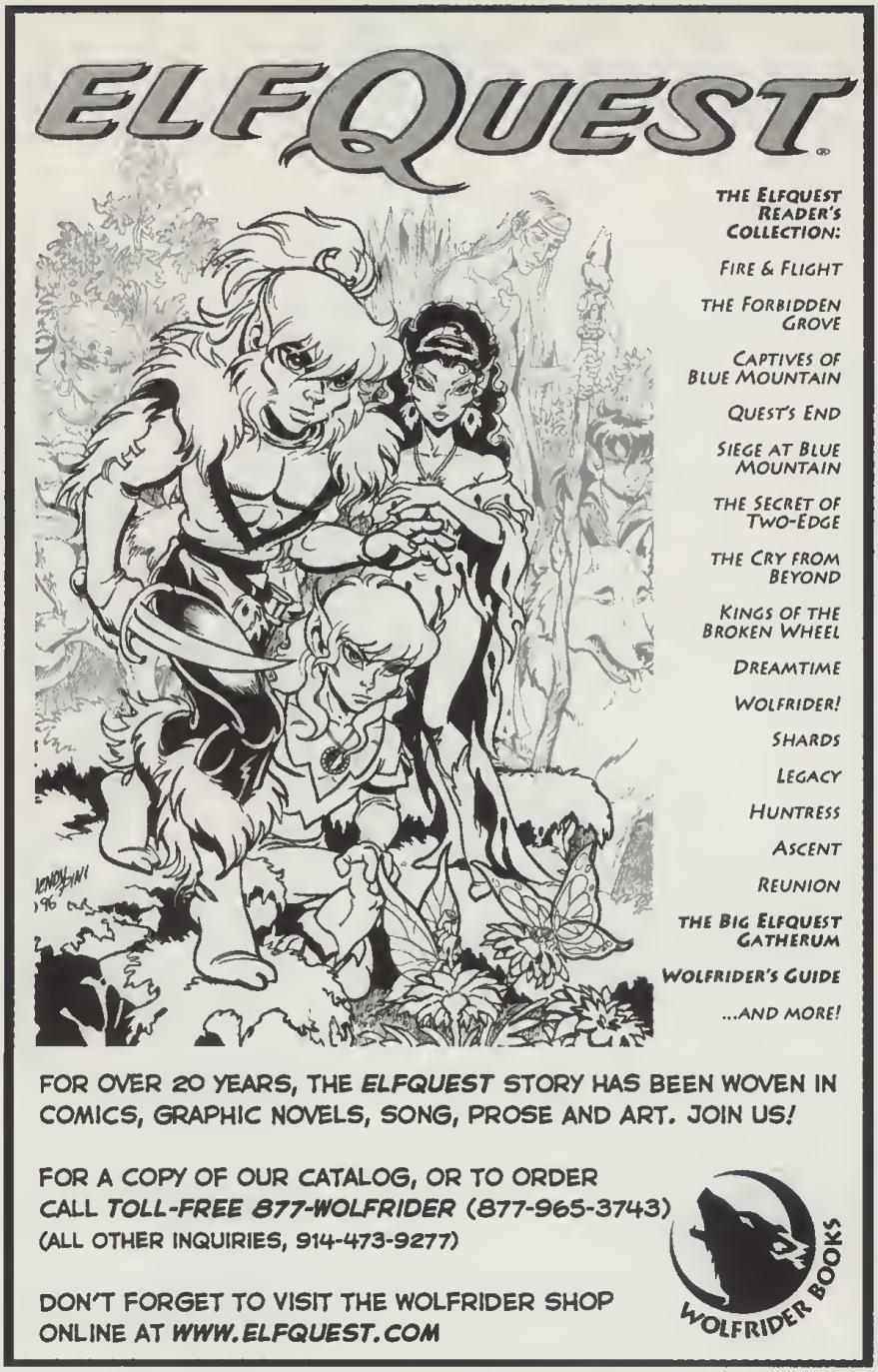


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S.T. Joshi; Dover Publications, Inc., NYC; 246 pp.; trade paperback; $9.95), a gathering-together of all the stories Blackwood wrote about his Holmesian psychic detective to be rip-roaring, hair-raising, blood-curdling stuff for all their Victorian stateliness and that if they are sufficiently appreciated the really creepy and highly original notions advanced in them will tip-toe behind you in dark alleys, wait patiently for you to turn out your light so that they can stir round you in the darkness and even haunt you in the cheeriest of locales.

S.T. Joshi points out in his excellent foreword that the appearance of the *John Silence Stories* was what catapulted Algernon Blackwood into fame and popularity. Let's do our best to see that it happens again.

It is more than likely you have already been ensorcelled by the work of Wayne Douglas Barlowe, most likely in his helpful guides to extraterrestrials, and know he is an excellent artist and an *imaginateur* of extraordinary range. Let me be the first to break the happy news—you ain't seen nothin' yet.

After the introduction in ***Barlowe's Inferno*** (written and illustrated by Wayne Douglas Barlowe and introduced by Tanith Lee; Galerie Morpheus International, Inc., Beverly Hills, CA; 72 pp.; hardcover, $24.95) wherein he lays out the thinking and essential principles underlying what's to follow (the Hell presented is not restricted to the Judaeo-Christian concepts though highly indebted to them) he employs a Blakeian/De Quinceian narrative to haul the reader nonstop from one stunning image to another.

The landscapes are painted in such a stately, spreading way that you suspect the originals must be towering murals running for blocks. The demons are rendered in somber portraits that marvelously suggest brutish, horrific power and not a fleck of empathy. My favorite feature of these works is Barlowe's extremely clever notion of working in glowing, floating versions of those strange, spidery sigils which are such an important feature of the great grimoires so beloved of the wizards of yore. The souls are well and truly doomed, every one hideously distorted by the cold pawing of the demons, all of them totally cowed. Study this book and mend thy ways.

Without doubt the best thing Mr. Barlowe has done to date. That means it's very good, indeed.

Gahan Wilson

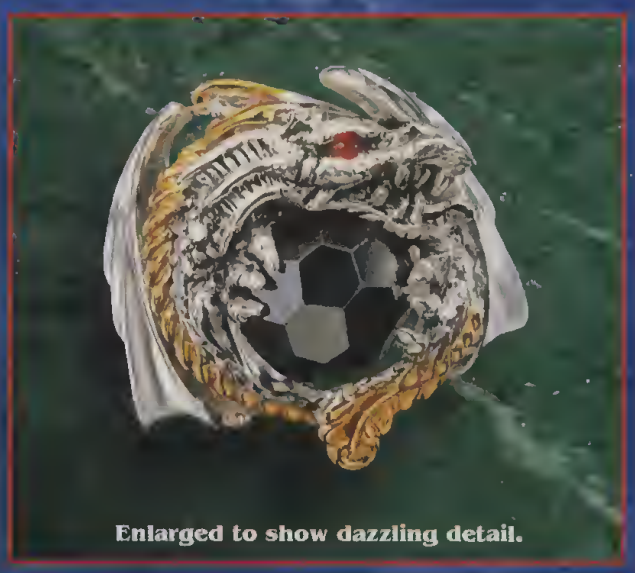
Extremities, by Kathe Koja; Four Walls Eight Windows, NY; 208 pp.; hardcover, $20.00.

Many good writers craft sentences that move their stories ahead with power and clarity. Only a few hone those sentences into haunting, razor-sharp poetry. Kathe Koja is one such writer. Her stories read like no others, stream-of-consciousness prose-poems that immerse us in the claustrophobic worlds of characters ensnared by obsession. This collection of 16 stories embodies Koja at her best.

While she has written some incredible novels, Koja's strength as a writer comes through

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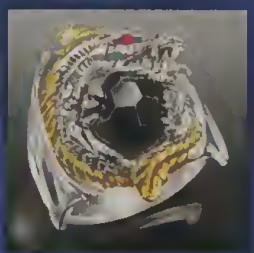
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most powerfully in the short form. She needs only a few pages to immerse us in the tunnel vision of a character whose life is barreling toward chaos. Often an image or idea is captured so perfectly in words that a single phrase or sentence will encapsulate the entire story, resonating in the reader's head after the story is finished, like the echo of an obsession long gone, or one just beginning to form.

This is very much the case with the first story in the collection, "Arrangement for Invisible Voices." Olson takes his wife to a pig roast, and as the pigs cook, he—and apparently others at the roast as well—hears the pigs screaming. Olson realizes that the pigs are not simply screaming over their own deaths, but about "some huge death." It is this phrase that haunts the reader throughout the story, as the screams of the pigs haunt Olson. What exactly this "huge death" is remains a mystery, but I think most of us have hints of such revelations from time to time, of profound truths underlying our lives, though we don't usually speak of them. Koja has been compared to Edgar Allan Poe, and the comparison is well deserved. This story reads like a more sophisticated, intimate version of Poe's "The Black Cat."

Some of Koja's strongest stories involve sex. In "Bondage," a couple begins to incorporate an eyeless mask in their lovemaking, first one wearing it and then the other being drawn to the idea "visible and not, here and not-here." As their obsession grows, their old identities begin to dissolve and new identities to form, reflecting the masks they choose to wear.

In "The Neglected Garden" a husband tries to throw his wife out of the house, but she refuses to leave, instead threading loose wires on the backyard fence through her wrists and crucifying herself there. Although he wants her gone, the husband finds himself unable to summon the police, an ambulance, or even to forcefully detach her himself. Instead, stunned, he monitors her day-by-day deterioration. This story actually upset me so much I nearly stopped reading, which for me is high praise. This is one I'll never forget.

If you're not afraid of being gotten to, and you're as fascinated by obsession as I am, then you must read *Extremities*. It's a powerful, haunting work by one of the premier stylists of Fantastic Fiction.

Jeanne Cavelos

Enchantment, by Orson Scott Card; Del Rey; NY; 387pp.; Hardback; $25.00.

Have you ever wondered what happens after Happily Ever After? Considered what occurs in the days that follow the brave and stalwart knight's ride off into the sunset with his princess of unsurpassable beauty? Pondered on those intangible moments that we know exist somewhere past the last page but to which we will never be privy? Breathe a long sigh of relief, for at last, the wait is over.

Orson Scott Card's *Enchantment* takes us beyond the curtain of the cursive scrawl of "The End" that normally bars our way, past the famous folklore kisses, past everything we've come to know of classic folk tales, and on into a realm that will open your tearducts even as it opens your eyes.

Enchantment tells the story of Ivan, a Russian Jew transplanted at the age of 10 to western New York. Since having left the Ukraine, Ivan has been haunted by a lost opportunity from his childhood: a mysterious chasm in the Russian countryside filled with leaves, and a pedestal in the middle upon which a beautiful woman slept. He had fled in fear. Years later when Ivan returns to the Ukraine to finish his dissertation, he feels pulled to that mysterious clearing again. After keeping an exceptionally intelligent bear at bay, he makes his way to the pedestal and kisses the beautiful girl. And this is only the first 50 pages.

The fairy tale quickly becomes reality for Ivan. Hand in hand with the Sleeping Beauty Katerina, Ivan crosses a bridge that transports him a thousand years into the past to the small kingdom of Taina. Every manner and mode of danger awaits him there: betrayal, murder, magic, politics, marriage, love, and (last but most certainly not least) the witch Baba Yaga, the source of it all. Ivan is not so blind during his adventures that he cannot realize he is, in fact, living a folk tale, but on much different terms than he could ever have guessed.

Although the tale of Sleeping Beauty is referred to throughout the book, *Enchantment* is so much more than merely that ancient tale with a modern twist. It answers the question of anachronistic love between a temporally displaced couple. It feels like a cross between Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and the tale of *Jack and the Beanstalk* with a splash of two-way time travel. This is a compelling and vibrant story that turns classic ideas on their heads, written by a true master. Every fan of Fantasy, of Card, or of solid storytelling will consider it priority reading.

Brian Murphy

Books to Watch For

The Radiant Seas, by Catherine Asaro, a Tor hardcover, $26.95. Physicist Asaro has a knack for weaving hard science, adventure, and romance into a marvelous web of a tale. Sacrifice and a genetic legacy of pain make this a unique and forceful saga.



The Last Dragonlord, by Joanne Bertin, Tor Hardcover, $25.95. A first novel of great power and imagination. Dragonlord Linden Rathan is the last-born of a race of immortal were-dragons. Mortal affairs become all too real to Linden and he must delve into the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of Queen Cassori.

Colors of Chaos, by L.E. Modesitt, Jr., St. Martin's Press, Hardcover, $27.95. The new novel in the *Saga of Recluce* and a direct sequel to "The White Order," this is a story of an age-old civilization held together by magic. An intelligent and original book replete with action and philosophy.

The Hallowed Isle (A Novel of King Arthur), by Diana L. Paxson, Avon Eos Trade Paperback, $10.00. The classic legend is given a rich retelling by sometime *Realms* writer Diana L. Paxson. The legendary sword, Ex Calibur, is ultimately a god-sword, a weapon and symbol of power and dominion. Paxson reimagines the high king and tells his tale of destiny from the unique perspectives of four distinct tribal cultures.

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BY RESA NELSON

This summer's The Mummy *brings a classic to the theater, with a modern twist.*

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THE DECISIONS MADE BY NAPOLEON BONAPARTE TWO HUNDRED years ago have greatly influenced the making of *The Mummy*, a new film scheduled for release on May 7 by Universal Pictures.

Napoleon Bonaparte and four thousand soldiers invaded Egypt in 1798. He'd been sanctioned by the French Government to create a canal through Suez. One month later, Admiral Nelson led the British Navy in an attack on the French fleet and destroyed it. One of the French ships lost in the battle was carrying the funds for the Egyptian expeditions. As a result, Bonaparte's troops were stranded among the pyramids without money or supplies. Bonaparte had not brought just the four thousand soldiers with him, however. He'd also brought 175 scholars along who were members of the French Commission of Arts and Science.



Universal's The Mummy *is a veritable tomb of horrors.*

The French scholars included artists, mathematicians, astronomers, botanists, mineralogists, biologists, architects, geologists, and chemists. Their role was to be the first to survey and map Egypt. They studied, sketched, and measured the ancient Egyptian ruins and monuments in painstaking detail at the same time that the French Army struggled with the native population. Although Bonaparte returned to a hero's welcome in France in 1799, his scholars pressed onward for a few years, accompanied by a small section of the French Army. The scholars marched between 25 and 30 miles every day. They worked under extreme pressure. About one-third of them died on the expedition. The scholars were in constant danger and often had only a few minutes at a time to work at ancient Egyptian sites. Artists sometimes had only minutes to complete their sketches. Soldiers even melted down lead bullets to provide pencils for the artists, because their mission was given such great importance.

Although the military expedition ultimately failed, and the French occupation of Egypt ended in 1801, Bonaparte's scholars returned to France with their findings. The Commission published the results in 10 official volumes of text and 14 large-format volumes of engraved plates, all of which was entitled *Description de l'Egypte*.

Set designer Allan Cameron (*Willow*) stumbled across a modern-day publication of these plates. "In Marrakech, when I was scouting [for locations], I came across a reproduction of a book on Napoleon when he invaded Egypt ... with etchings and lithographs that he had his artists and architects and archaeological experts put together. So that became our sort of bible.

The Mummy is an expensive and elaborate reworking of the 1932 film, *The Mummy* (that starred Boris Karloff). The 1999 version stars Brendan Fraser (*George of the Jungle, Blast from the Past*), Rachel Weisz (*Swept from the Sea*), and John Hannah (*Sliding Doors*). It's a mix of romance, action-adventure, humor, suspense, and horror, with ground-breaking special effects provided by Industrial Light & Magic.

Writer/director Stephen Sommers (*The Jungle Book, Deep Rising*) has had a lifelong interest in the 1932 version of *The Mummy*. "When I was a kid, it was the only horror movie that scared the hell out of me," he says. "I always thought Frankenstein was kind of sad, and Dracula was really cool. But *The Mummy*—it's one of those movies like *Journey to the Center of the Earth* or *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*—that really stuck with me."

While Sommers was writing and directing movies for Disney, he kept a close eye on what was happening at Universal. "I started thinking about this seven years ago. Universal Studios had about five other directors and seven

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other writers on it. Every time I'd finish a movie and check into it, they'd have a new director on board. Everyone from Joe Dante to Romero was on it. Finally, after I finished my last film... I know the new guys who took over Universal and I called them up. I read in Daily Variety that the latest director had fallen out, that they couldn't agree on the movie they wanted to make or whatever. And so I thought, 'Oh, there's my shot.' So I called up and got a meeting with them, and I pitched them my idea. And it's so funny because for about nine years they'd been trying to make *The Mummy*, but they were all trying to do remakes. And all the scripts were like low-budget gothic horror movies. And I went in and said, 'Look, I really don't want to do a remake. I just want to do a re-do of *The Mummy*. I love all the mythology and that sort of stuff and I love ancient Egypt. If I do it, I want to do the big event, romantic, adventure/action *Mummy*.' So I pitched them my story, and they went for it."

Sommers had something big in mind. "It's much more of a swashbuckler," he says. "There's a lot of action in it. This is much more of an epic." And yet, it's even more than that. Because of Sommers' interest in ancient Egypt, he wanted to get the facts right. He worked to interweave the magic of ancient Egypt with character, story, and even the special effects, so that it all blends together.

Sommers explains the story. "The movie starts in ancient Egypt. We establish who Imhotep is [the man who becomes the mummy], and what he does, and why he gets cursed. And then we cut to 1925 and the movie picks up. We meet Brendan Fraser, who's a French Foreign Legionnaire, and he ends up joining forces with Rachel Weisz, who's a librarian in the museum in Cairo. The two of them and her brother take off on this adventure to find this lost city where they think there's buried treasure. And they end up digging up old Imhotep.

An example of the attention to detail is the fact that Sommers enlisted the aid of a former UCLA professor. "There are certain people in the movie who speak only ancient Egyptian. Even though no one has heard the language in over two thousand years, this professor went through every line of dialogue on a tape recorder and taped out how he thought they would pronounce all these words ... They're speaking a dialect, a form of Egyptian."

Research was also critical to the set design. Cameron is a former fine artist who studied at the Royal College of Arts in London, as well as Oxford's Art School. He approaches designing the sets for a movie with the mind set of an artist. "It's a bit like painting a picture, really," Cameron says. "You start off with a blank canvas, which is the blank bit of paper you have on your design board. The script is really the jumping-off point and the inspiration. And the director, likewise. Gradually, as you talk to the director and read the script, you build up this image of what you hope the movie is going to be like."

The Mummy takes place in two time periods: 1925, during which an expedition of explorers stumble upon an ancient tomb in the Sahara Desert, and BC 1200, when Imhotep, an Egyptian priest, is sentenced to an eternity as one of the living dead.

"People only remember all the sequels," Sommers notes. "There were all of these lame sequels where the guy in bandages was stumbling around and trying to kill people. And in the original, with Boris Karloff, he was only the mummy in that first scene. I wanted to make sure [our mummy] couldn't just be unwrapped and you can't outrun him."

Sommers explains how the character of the mummy and his return to life blends in with ancient Egyptian practices. "I realized when he wakes up, even though he's 3000 years old, he's still a 35-year-old man. His body's aged 3000 years, but I didn't want him to be stumbling around. He starts as a corpse and he slowly regenerates."

What Sommers describes is in perfect alignment with ancient Egyptian practices. Egyptian religion revolved around the passage from this life into the next, the Afterlife. Mummification was a key ingredient to the deceased's ability to make that journey successfully, thus ensuring life after death. Over the course of time, mummification evolved into a 70-day ritual, full of specific procedures in handling the corpse that included spells and magic. After the body was cleansed, the lungs, liver, stomach, and intestines were removed. Each organ was embalmed, wrapped, and placed in its own canopic jar, a vessel with a stopper shaped like a human or animal head. The corpse was then dried with natron, a type of salt that was native to Egypt. It was only near the end of this 70-day period that the body was finally wrapped in linen.

The canopic jars were placed in a painted wooden chest, which was buried with the body in its tomb.

Sommers describes how the regeneration of the mummy is visually accomplished. "It starts off with a completely CG [computer-generated] walking corpse. He slowly starts getting skin and muscle and bone back. At a certain point, we end up with the actor. We remove large pieces of skin: You can see through his cheek, you can see into his chest. On the outside, he's got skin, but once you take the skin away, he's still a rotted, old mummy. That was all ILM (Industrial Light & Magic). It's really interesting and fascinating without being gory. It's a PG-13 rated movie. It's not gory ...it's really kind of cool and creepy and quite often very scary."

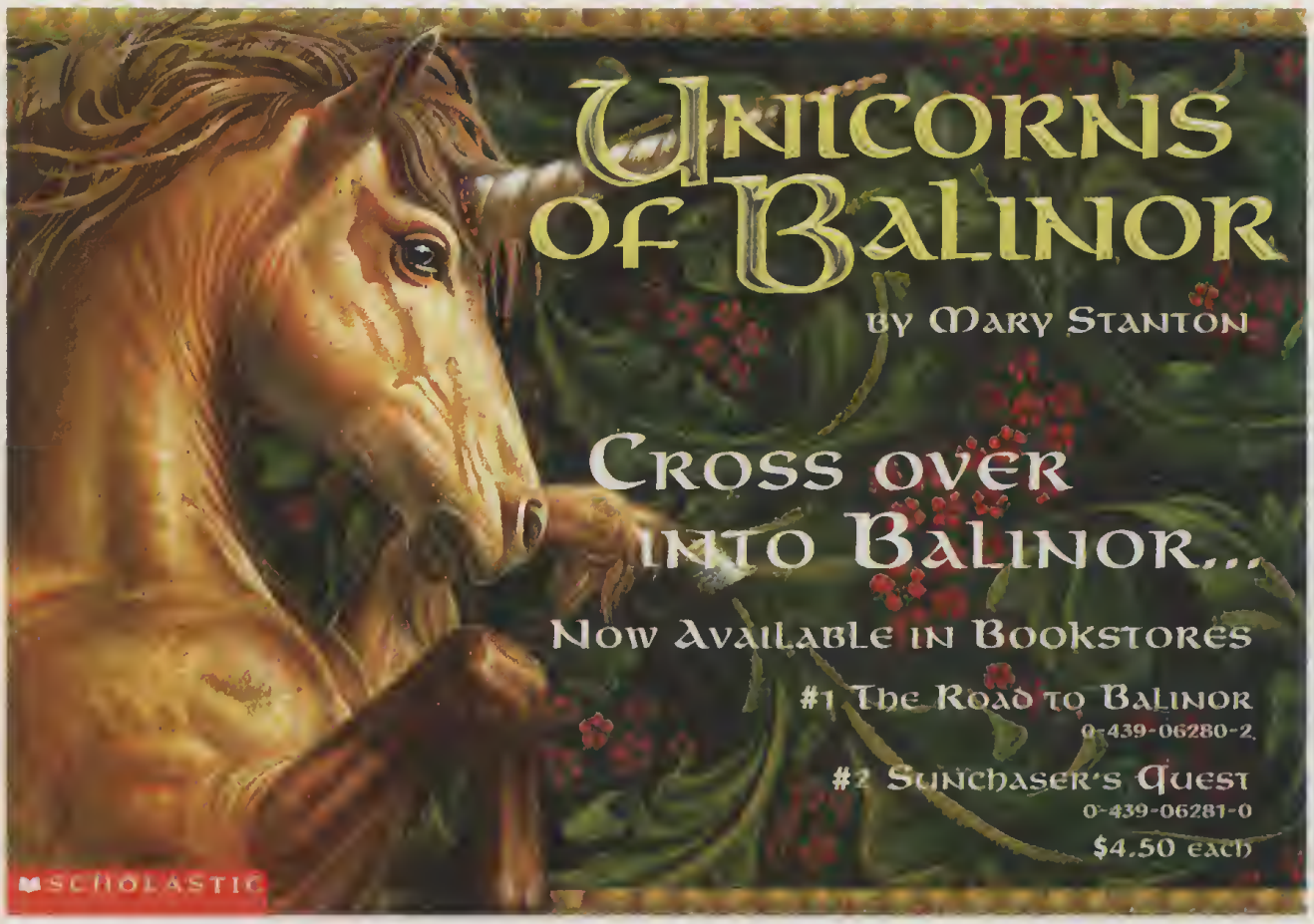
Costume designer John Bloomfield (*Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves, Conan the Barbarian*) began with research, but explains the role that costumes play in guiding the audience's emotions throughout the film. "The first thing you do is make the costumes appeal to everybody," Bloomfield says. "You wouldn't pick something to go on your leading lady that isn't sexy." He points out that sometimes historical accuracy must be sacrificed. Part of his job is ensuring that the costumes don't get in the way of leading audiences to the emotional response that the film is going for.

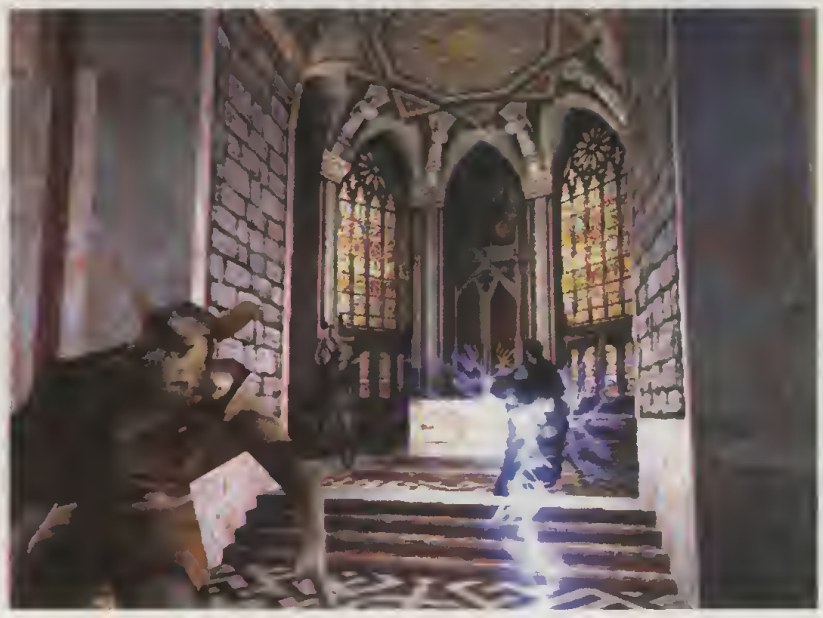


ABOVE: Armed with bravery and a pistol, Brendan Fraser leads his team deep into the Mummy's tomb.

At the same time, Bloomfield took great pains to make sure that the details of authentic Egyptian clothing translated well to the screen. "Doing something from three thousand years is quite difficult," Bloomfield says. Typically, he'd prefer to use photographs to study the clothing from a specific time period. Instead of photographs, he used the remarkable art left behind by the ancient Egyptians. "It's very graphic. If you get something

Continued on page 36





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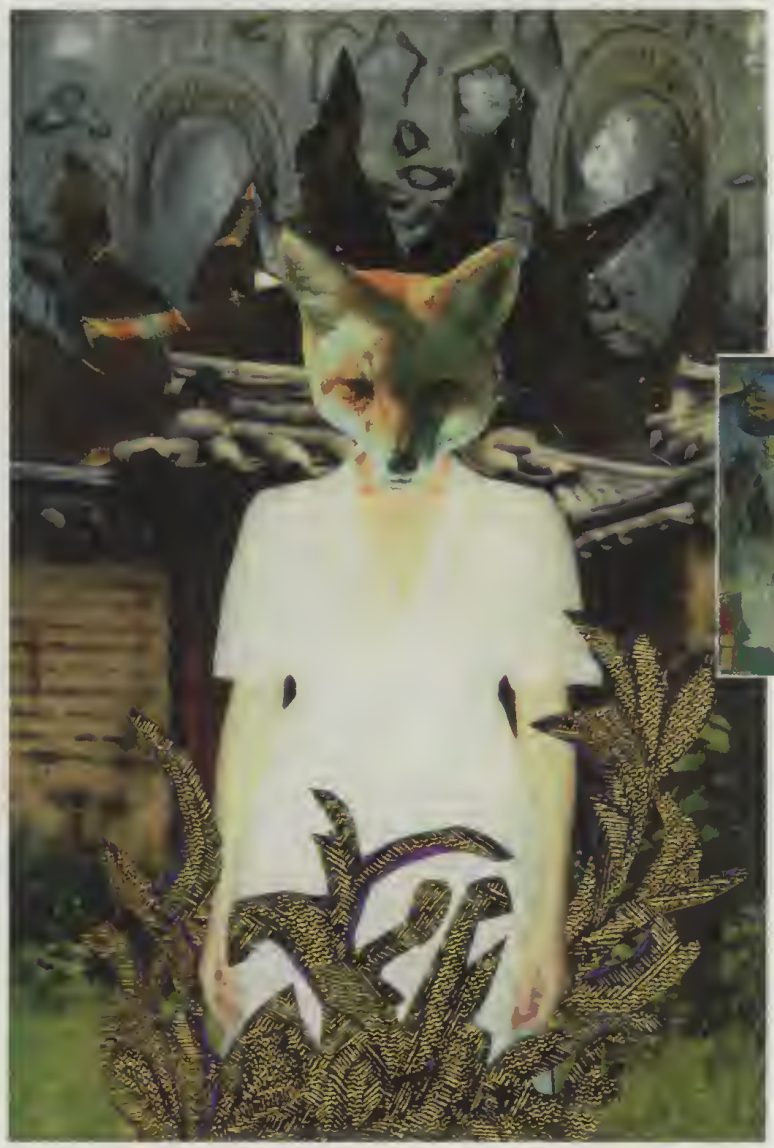
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BY HEINZ INSU FENKL

Be careful what you wish for, the ghosts and demons are listening.

IN KOREA, THE MOST FRIGHTENING GHOSTS ARE THE GHOSTS OF YOUNG WOMEN WHO HAVE not fulfilled their feminine potential. In other words, women who died without marrying and having children—preferably male children. In the old days there was a custom of burying dead maidens in a flat grave on or near a well-traveled road in the hopes that some passing gentleman would expose to the maiden's spirit his "most precious thing." I had always wondered about this custom, since traditional graves are all constructed with a dome-shaped mound of earth on top. (The larger mounds are so huge a whole school class could picnic on one; they representing royalty. The smallest mounds are about the diameter of a hula hoop, and they represent infants.) When I was ten, my storyteller uncle explained this "most precious thing" to me by telling me this story:





BELOW: A 19th century Japanese woodcut of a kitsune. INSET: A dead maided. (painting by Anne B. Dalton)

The Maiden's Grave

One evening, a young scholar was staggering down a trail in the mountains, drunk from having imbibed too much at a local celebration. He was in such a hurry that he didn't even have time to go into the woods, and he relieved himself right on the road, pissing for a long time right there. Just as he was pulling his pants up and tying the strings, he heard a young woman's voice. "I am eternally grateful to you," she said. "I died a maiden, and so I was buried here in a flat grave. But now that you have shown me your most precious thing, I can go into the next world fulfilled." The young scholar was frightened out of his wits, but they say the maiden's ghost was kind to him, and eventually, when he went to the capital to take the civil examination, he passed with the highest marks in the land.

This particular scholar was lucky. Consider another story I was told about another young man who relieves himself on the road:

The Bone that was a Fox

One day a man relieved himself on a bone that was lying on the path. "Is it warm?" he said.

"It's warm," the bone replied.

"Is it cold?"

"It's cold," said the bone.

The frightened man ran away, hardly able to pull his pants up, and the bone chased him. Finally, he came to an ale house and he escaped out of the back. Years later the same man stopped at an ale house to drink, and he was served by a ravishingly beautiful woman. "My," he said to her, "you look familiar for some reason."

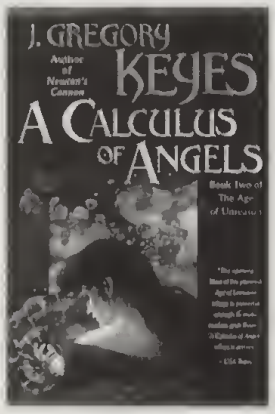
"I should," she replied, "because I'm the bone you made water on all those years ago and I've been waiting for you!" And suddenly she changed into her true form, which was a fox, and she ate him up.

The moral of these stories is not that men in old Korea had to be careful where they urinated. They are tales

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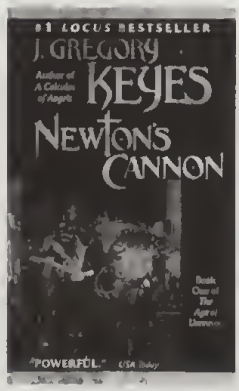


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that seem to be flip sides of one another and yet ones that reflect similar underlying fears about femininity. When I was a boy, we used to terrify each other with ghost stories late at night, and nearly all of the evil ghosts were female. Two of the most frightening images I recall are the broom ghost (an evil being created when a maiden's first menstrual blood happens to pollute a yard broom) and the classic dead maiden's ghost, a figure dressed all in white with long black hair. The maiden's ghost often appears out of the center of a grave mound that splits in two. By the late '60s, when the Dracula films made it to Korea, the maiden's ghost was often depicted with long, bloody fangs. There was also the egg ghost, one whose face was entirely blank, and the ghosts of women who died after they had wrongly lost their virtue.

In Korea in the '60s it was still common for someone traveling at night in the country to challenge a stranger with the question, "Are you man or ghost?" My mother's oldest brother was said to have been enticed by a ghost when he was a young man—that was the story of how he had gotten the wound on his foot that would never heal. Over the years he had to sell off most of his land for expensive Chinese herbal remedies and shamanic ceremonies to cure his foot, but to no avail. Western doctors had told him to amputate the foot nearly 30 years earlier, but he had stubbornly maintained his search for a cure. So when he told me my first fox demon story in a room filled with the faint odor of his festering wound, it was all the more convincing.

The Fox Sister

A long time ago there was a man who had three sons but no daughter. It was his dearest wish to have a daughter, so he went up into the mountains and prayed to the spirits. One night, after months of prayer, he was so desperate he said, "Please, Hannanim, give me a daughter even if she is a fox!"

Soon the man discovered that his wife was pregnant, and in time she had a beautiful girl. The man was happy. But when the daughter was about six years old, strange things began to happen. Every night a cow would die, and in the morning they could never find a trace of what had killed it. So the man told his first son to keep watch one night.

In the morning, the first son told a terrible story of what had happened. "Father, I could not believe my own eyes," he said. "It is our little sister who is killing the cattle. She came out in the middle of the night and I followed her to the cattle shed. By the moonlight I could see her as she did a little dance. Then she oiled her hand and her arm with sesame oil. She shoved her whole arm into the cow's anus and pulled out its liver. She ate it raw while the cow died without a sound. That is all I saw, father, for it was too horrible to witness any longer."

The father was outraged. "That is not possible," he said. "Tell me the truth."

"That is the truth, Father."

"Then you must have had a nightmare. That means you have betrayed my trust by falling asleep when you were supposed to keep watch. Leave my sight at once! You are no longer my son!" And so he threw out his eldest son.

Now it was the second son's turn to keep watch. Everything was fine for a month, but then when the full moon came around the same thing happened, and in the morning he made his report to his father.

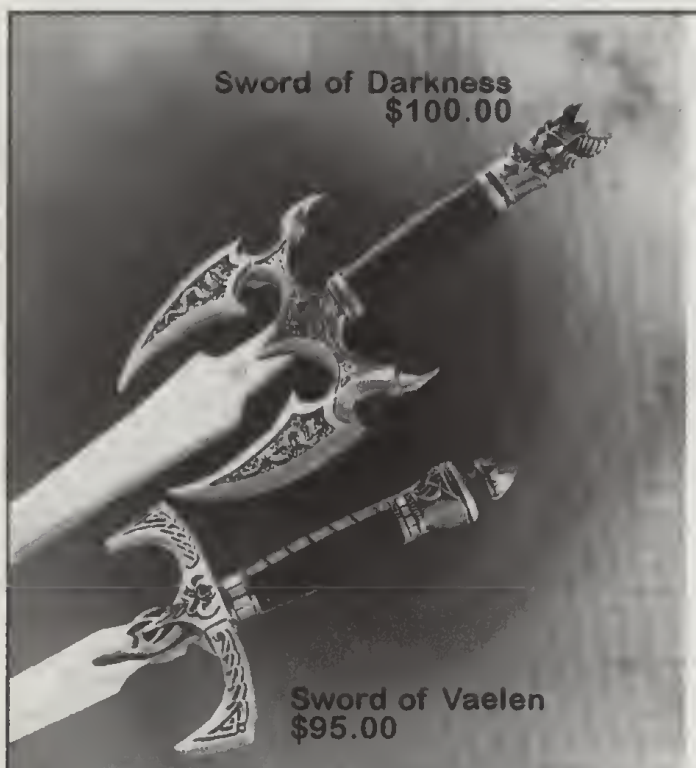
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"That is the truth, Father."

"Then you must have had a nightmare. That means you have betrayed my trust by falling asleep when you were supposed to keep watch. Leave my sight at once! You are no longer my son!" And so he threw out his second son.

So it was the youngest son's turn to keep watch over his sister, and once again, everything was fine for a month. When the full moon came around, the same thing happened, but having seen the fates of his older brothers, the youngest son lied.

"Father," he said. "Our little sister came out in the middle of the night and I followed her to the outhouse. She made water and came out again. As I passed by the cattle shed in the moonlight I saw that a cow had



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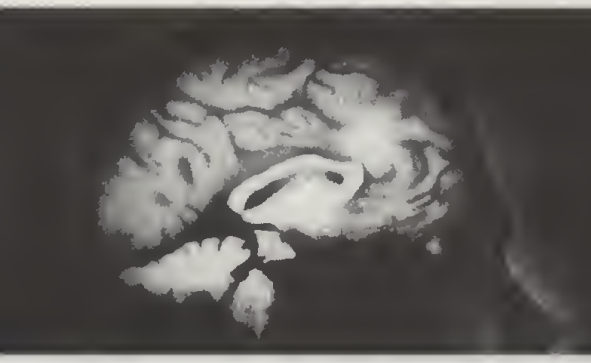
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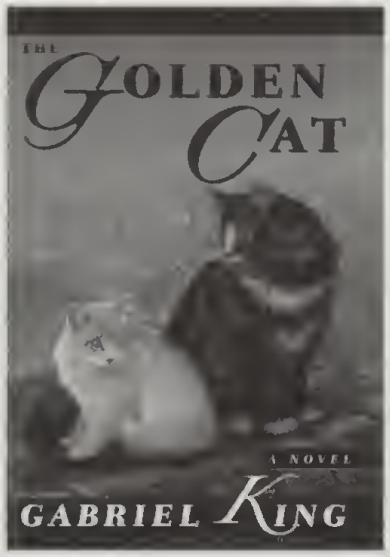
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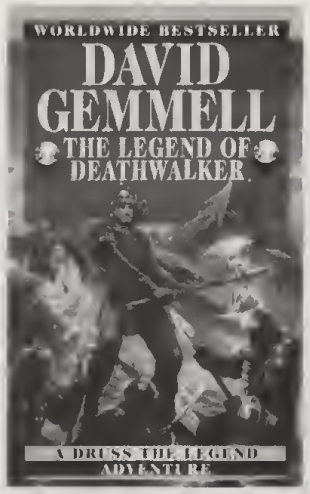


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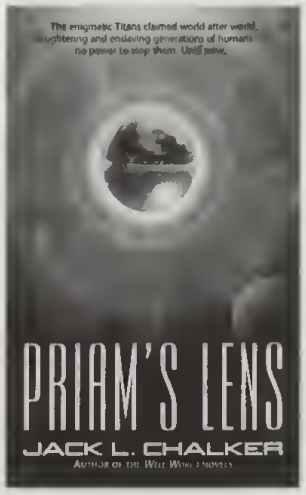
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died. It must have been frightened by the full moon."

"Then you have done your duty as a son should," said the father. "You shall inherit my lands when I have gone to join our ancestors."

Meanwhile, the first two sons were no more than beggars wandering the countryside. Eventually they had both come to the top of a mountain where an old Buddhist master took them in and they studied diligently with him until their hearts grew sore to see their home again. After a year they decided to return to their village for a visit. The old master made the two brothers a gift of three magic bottles, one white, one blue, and one red. "Use these as I have instructed," he told them, "and you shall be able to defeat any foe, even that sister of yours, who is surely a fox demon."

The brothers thanked the old monk and returned to their village to find it entirely deserted. When they reached their house they found the roof in terrible disrepair and yard overgrown with weeds. Inside, the paper panels on the doors were all in tatters. They found their sister all alone. "Where is everyone? Where is father? Where is our youngest brother? Where is mother?" they asked.

"They're all dead," said the sister. She didn't explain, but the brothers knew why. "I'm all alone now," she said. "Brothers, won't you stay with me?"

"No," they said. "We must be on our way. There is nothing for us here."

"Why, it's nearly dark," said the sister. "Won't you at least stay the night?" They reluctantly agreed, and somehow the sister prepared them a fabulous meal with wine that night. They were suspicious, and they planned to take turns keeping watch that night, but they had been so starved during their year of poverty that they ate and drank their fill and soon they were fast asleep. In the middle of the night the older brother awoke suddenly with a full bladder. He thought his younger brother was still eating—it sounded like someone chewing—so he turned over in annoyance to tell him to stop. In the moonlight he saw the table still in the room, their leftovers strewn about. But instead of white rice, what he saw were maggots. Instead of wine, there were cups of blood. Instead of turnip kimchi there were severed human fingers. He sat up in horror, realizing what he had eaten, and then he saw what was making the noise—it was his sister straddling their dead brother's body, chewing on his bloody liver.

"Did you sleep well, dear oldest brother?" she said. "I need only one more, and then I will be a human being."

The oldest brother leaped from his sleeping mat and ran out of the house. He was still groggy from the enchanted food, and he stumbled and staggered as he ran down the road in the moonlight. Soon his sister gave chase and she easily caught up to him.

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Remembering the old Buddhist monk's instructions, the brother took the white bottle and threw it behind him. Suddenly, in a puff of smoke, a vast thicket of thorn bushes blocked the sister's way. She was trapped for a moment, but then she changed into her original form—that of the fox—and easily escaped. In a short time she had caught up to him again. This time the brother took the blue bottle and threw it behind him. There was a loud splash, and a vast lake appeared. Once again the sister was trapped. She struggled to swim, but then she changed into the fox again and easily paddled ashore. The oldest brother was exhausted and terrified. He could run no more. He took the red bottle and he flung it at the fox, saying, "Ya! Take that!" There was a blinding flash of light, and the fox was engulfed in a ball of fire. She burned to death, screaming, and when there were only ashes left a small, whining insect flew out. And that is how the first mosquito came into the world. And that is why both the fox and the mosquito are afraid of grass fires.

Even now it is hard for me to take a dispassionate view of the story—I still find it rather frightening. In retrospect, as a folklorist, I can see how this particular fox demon story combines several common motifs found throughout Asia and Europe: the three magic bottles, the disowned brothers, the corrupt youngest son, the origin of the mosquito. But as a child, I found the story truly terrifying, particularly because we did not have an indoor toilet, and I dreaded the thought of having to go out into the night to the outhouse.

The ideology imbedded in the story was not apparent to me then, but now it is quite transparent. Note how the mother is mentioned twice but never really appears in the story (she gave birth to the fox daughter, and her job is done). In many folk tales, the absence of the mother places the daughter at special risk, or highlights her distinct role in the family, often casting her as a representative for women in general. Note also how in advocating for his daughter, the father disowns his two oldest sons, the very ones at the top of the order of inheritance. It is no accident that it is the female—the daughter/fox that ruins the household. These particulars are all in keeping with a cautionary message to the Confucian listener. In a culture in which the old Confucian saying, "Namjon Yobi" ("Man high, woman low") is still invoked today, the message of this tale is quite clear: To irrationally keep a daughter at the expense of one's sons is to bring ruin upon the family.

In order to make its point, the story invokes one of the most feared feminine figures, the fox demon, and pits it against the most desired male figure, the eldest son, who happens to be the hero of the tale. To remind the listener that the fox has not been entirely vanquished, the story explains the origin of the blood-sucking mosquito by linking it to

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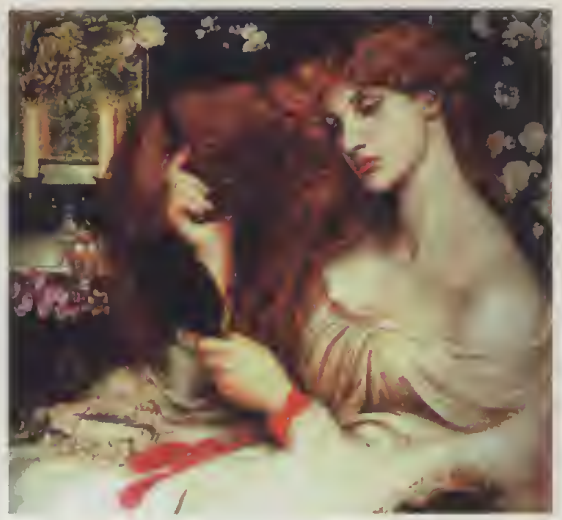
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the fox demon. This seems simply a clever narrative twist at first, but keep in mind that it also serves a rather pointed ideological function. In Korea, summers tend to be mosquito-infested (even today) because of the rice paddies. The ending of the story ensures that every time someone is bitten by a (female!) mosquito, they recall the cautionary tale that idealizes sons and demonizes daughters. It serves as a sharply honed ideological tool disguised as entertainment and tradition.

Of course, foxes in Korean folk tales are not always female, but they are predominantly so, and almost always evil. They are generally seductive creatures that entice unwary scholars and travelers with the lure of their sexuality and the illusion of their beauty and riches. They drain the men of their yang—their masculine force—and leave them dissipated or dead (much in the same way La Belle Dame Sans Merci in Keats' poem leaves her parade of hapless male victims). In Korean the term for fox, "yowu," also refers to a conniving and cunning woman, quite similar to the term "vixen" in English, which is not quite as pejorative. Although Americans will use the modifier "foxy" to describe an attractive woman, Koreans would only use that term for its negative connotations.



ABOVE: The original dangerous owman, mother of all demons, Lady Lilith *as painted by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.*

Korean fox lore, which comes from China (from sources probably originating in India and overlapping with Sumerian lamia lore) is actually quite simple compared to the complex body of fox culture that evolved in Japan. The Japanese fox, or kitsune, probably due to its resonance with the indigenous Shinto religion, is remarkably sophisticated; whereas the arcane aspects of fox lore are known only to specialists in other East Asian countries, the Japanese kitsune lore is more commonly accessible. Tabloid media in Tokyo recently identified the negative influence of kitsune possession among members of the Aum Shinregyo (the cult responsible for the sarin attacks in the Tokyo subway). Popular media often report stories of young women possessed by demonic kitsune, and once in a while, in the more rural areas, one will run across positive reports of the kitsune associated with the rice god, Inari.

We tend not to draw close parallels between such distant Asian lore and the folklore in the American back yard, but it is not difficult to trace the fox lore directly to more universal themes about dangerous women. In Korea, for example, there is a figure parallel to that of the fox demon—the snake woman, called "sa-nyo" (by coincidence, the word "sa" happens to be a homophone for snake and death). In Eastern Europe, and even in England, the snake woman, or "lamia," is a well-known figure associated with images that are almost precisely parallel to those of the fox demon. In his poem "Lamia," the Romantic poet John Keats wrote: "Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!/She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:/And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there/But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?" The lamia is known for seducing men and then devouring them, also for stealing infants to drink their blood. The original Lamia, according to the Greek tales, was a Libyan queen who had an affair with Zeus. She was transformed into the snake-like monster by Zeus's jealous wife, Hera.

As one can see, the lamia is associated with vampires, particularly in the Mediterranean, and she is often associated with Lilith, "the mother of all demons," who is often said to be the first vampire. In Western lore, Lilith was the original dangerous woman. She is the first wife of Adam who refused to be subservient to him. For refusing to take the bottom position in their lovemaking, God cast her out of the Garden of Eden and transformed her into a demon who, ironically, often shows up in images of the Garden of Eden as a serpent with breasts. Lilith is also known, in Jewish lore, to steal infants at night to devour them. Her spirit is said to abide in mirrors, able to possess girls and women who look too frequently or too long at their reflections. This last feature is probably designed to discourage vanity in Jewish women, but it also suggests a possible origin to the connection between vampires and the lack of a reflection. (In some East Asian fox demon stories, there is a parallel connection to reflections: The mirror will show the fox's true form or the fox, in human form, will cast no reflection.)

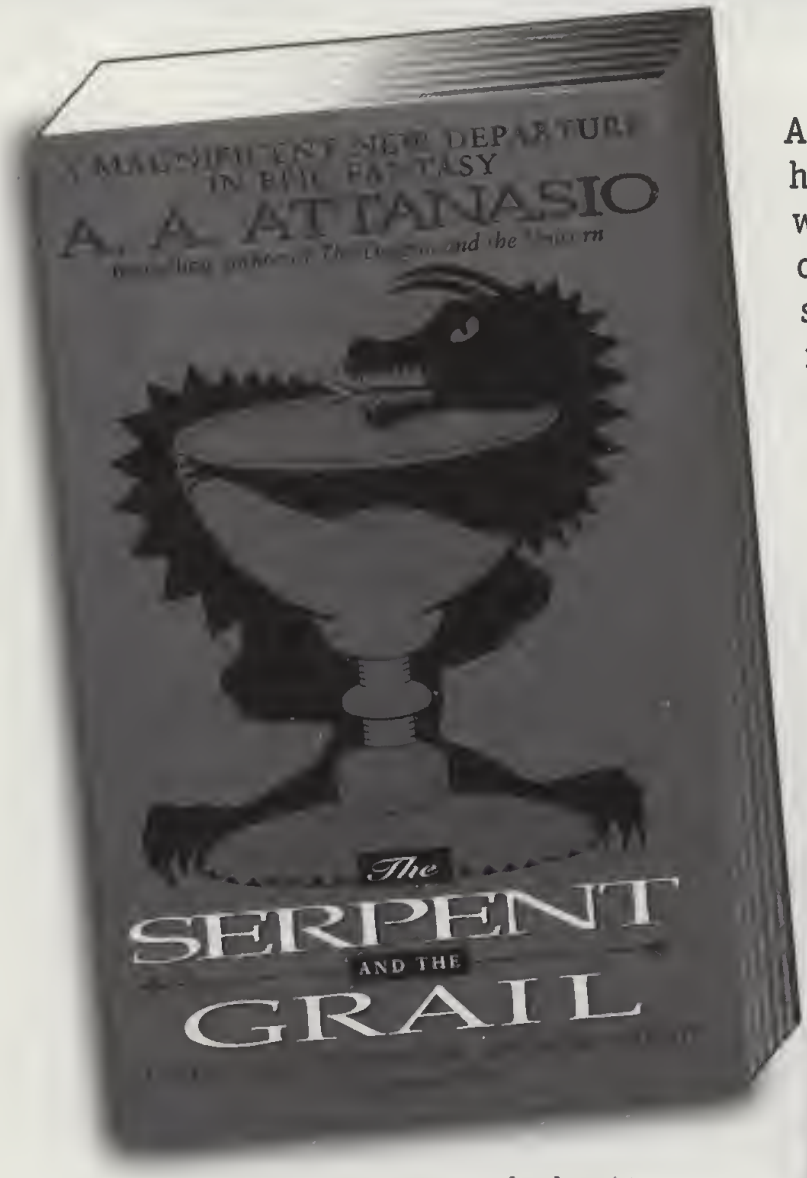
Dangerous women, traced from the earliest written Sumerian sources east to Japan and west to the Americas, are a commonplace of patriarchal cultures regardless of how liberal or oppressive they happen to be. The polarizing of female figures in folklore into the unreachable ideal on the one hand and the demonized vampire/snake/fox seductress on the other serves as subtle means of social control. One need not look far in current popular culture to find numerous examples of the latter category: Natasha Henstrigde in the *Species* films; Sharon Stone in *Basic Instinct*; the B starlet-of-the-week in the *Poison Ivy* series; Theresa Russell in *Black Widow*; and of course, every daytime and nighttime soap has its verion of the fox demon.

In recent years there has been a conscious move, on the part of women writers, to reclaim and reimagine these negative images. Consider the works of Angela Carter (especially the transformed fairy tales in *The Bloody Chamber*), the series of new adult fairy tales edited by Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow, the phenomenally popular New Age women's self-help book, *Women Who Run with the Wolves* by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, and finally, the most recent among these phenomena, the Lilith Fair. (Lots of dangerous women on stage and in the audience, according to some male music critics.) Unfortunately, in Korea, things aren't quite as optimistic. One of the major domestic box office hits in recent years was the first Korean film in which CGI effects were used in a morphing sequence. It was a woman turning into a fox demon.

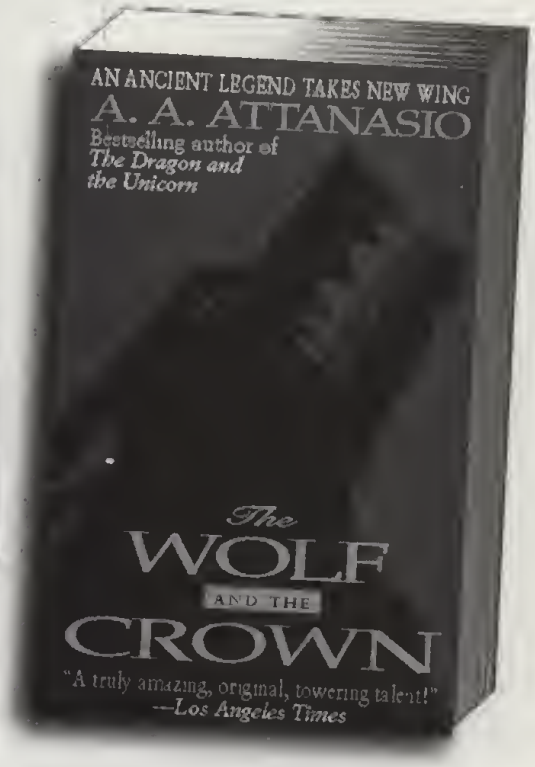
Suggested nonfiction readings: *Tales of Times Now Past*, translated and edited by Marian Ury (Japanese folktales, including several about kitsune). *Kitsune: Japan's Fox of Mystery, Romance, and Humour* by Kiyoshi Nozaki. *Lilith's Cave: Jewish Tales of the Supernatural*, edited by Howard Schwartz. *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, translated by Norman Bronznick, et al. (The origins of Lilith). "The Fox Wife" by Ellen Steiber, based on Japanese myths, in the anthology *Ruby Slippers, Golden Tears*, edited by Terri Windling and Ellen Datlow. ❧

Author Bio: Heinz Insu Fenkl is the author of Memories of My Ghost Brother, *an autobiographical novel about growing up in Korea as a biracial child in the '60s. He has taught at Sarah Lawrence, Bard, Vassar, and Yonsei University. His courses have included Creative Writing, Asian-American Literature, Korean Literature, and East Asian Folklore. Seventeen of his translations of Korean folktales will appear in the* Columbia Anthology of Traditional Korean Literature, *due to be published later this year; he is also completing his own volume of retellings of Korean folktales entitled,* In the Old, Old, Days when Tigers Smoked Tobacco Pipes: Myths, Legends, and Folktales from Korea. *He currently lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan, with his wife, Anne B. Dalton and their daughter, Isabella Myong-wol; he teaches in the graduate Creative Writing Program at Eastern Michigan University.*

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Continued from page 25

slightly wrong, it looks silly." Bloomfield was faced with the challenge of beginning with the two-dimensional images and creating three-dimensional costumes that would match the look and feel of the artwork. "Everything was drawn square on. They were wonderful graphic artists."

"The exciting thing about *The Mummy* from my point of view," says Cameron, "is designing ancient Egypt, which I'd never done before, so the research alone was marvelous. The '20s is a fabulous period, as well. Ancient Egypt and the 1920s is a designer's dream.

"I got the *Times of London* from the 1920s and *Illustrated London News* ... and everything I could possibly lay my hands on, really. And absorbed as much of it as possible."

Once Cameron finished his research, he did what Napoleon Bonaparte's scholars did: Cameron drew sketches of an imaginary place that is based on historical fact.

"I sat down for several weeks and did lots of sketches of what I thought the sets might look like, got my art department doing really rough models of what it might look like, and took them to the director for his approval and modifications.

"I did a lot of color sketches and watercolors and drawings of treasure chambers and the set we had to build in Morocco and changing Marrakech into Cairo of the '20s. You have to then translate sketches into architectural drawings, which we have a team of draftsmen and art directors do. I then have to give them to carpenters and plasterers and painters and scaffolders and modelers and all the trade people, who are going to make it look like the drawings. They need pretty accurate architectural drawings."

The mood of the film is especially important when it's a genre piece. Because movie-making is a collaborative process, it's imperative for everyone involved in all aspects to work together, especially in regard to how the desired mood is created.

Cameron explains the point of view of the set designer. "All designers in movies use the same elements: texture, color, form. I like to think of it almost as sculpture. The artists work in this three-dimensional environment that I create by the use of color, the artifacts I choose. I can create a sort of mood that's then enhanced by the director of photography. The color creates the mood of it. The lighting adds to that mood.

"I'd worked with Stephen Sommers before on *The Jungle Book*. And we used quite daring colors. I'd painted a city in India a deep blue, and the Ganges quite bright burnt oranges. So I tried to extend that into this movie. I was quite pleased with the use of color.

"The director of photography, myself, the costume designer, makeup, and everyone works really closely together on the colors to create the mood of the film."

Choosing costumes is a somewhat similar process. "Costumes are made up of textures, colors, and shapes," Bloomfield says. When he chooses fabrics, he thinks in terms of character traits. For example, a tough character requires tough-looking material.

Part of the mood of the film is created through contrast. *The Mummy* takes place in two basic environments: above the City of the Dead, which is located in the Sahara Desert, and focuses on the golden shades of the sand and the sunsets, and then below ground, where the mummy has been incarcerated and eventually comes back to life.

"He [director Stephen Sommers] wanted [the underground location to be] mysterious and dangerous," Cameron explains. "You're never quite sure what is around the corner. So it was two different moods. Everything above ground I tried to make gold and keep it all bright—the bright sunlight shining and everything else. And when you go underground, it becomes quite scary. It's a pretty straightforward contrast to do, but to keep it going for a whole movie is quite an exercise."

The Mummy was shot in London and Morocco. "We found this fantastic location in Morocco," Cameron explains. "Our hero finds this City of the Dead that's supposed to have been hidden for three thousand years. So we had to find a location where you'd believe the City of the Dead and the necropolis, where they find the mummy, couldn't be seen by anyone for that amount of years.

"We managed to find this extinct volcanic crater in the middle of a fairly flat desert. As we drove toward it, it looked extraordinary sticking up out of the desert. And as we got to it, there was actually an entrance into it.

"So I built this city within this volcanic cone, and that was quite challenging, because it was on the edge of the desert in Morocco. I had to get all the materials there, find the labor—we used about a hundred people there—and when the crew arrived, the whole town was packed with the crew.

"We had to sculpt nearly everything in England and have it shipped down to the desert and then had a small construction crew from England, and used all the local people to build it. I had a big team of sculptors, and I think they did a pretty good job of copying the artifacts. A lot of it was sculpted in clay and polystyrene, and then we made molds of them and cast them in fiberglass. You're on the edge of the desert. We had sandstorms and high winds, so the materials had to be durable. They had to stand up to desert conditions."

Although working in those desert conditions proved to be a major challenge for everyone who worked on the project, it's one more link in a chain of making *The Mummy* as realistic as possible. "If the movie has an air of believability, of reality, so much the better," Sommers remarks. "Especially when you're making a movie about a guy who comes back to life after three thousand years."

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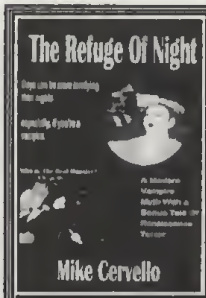
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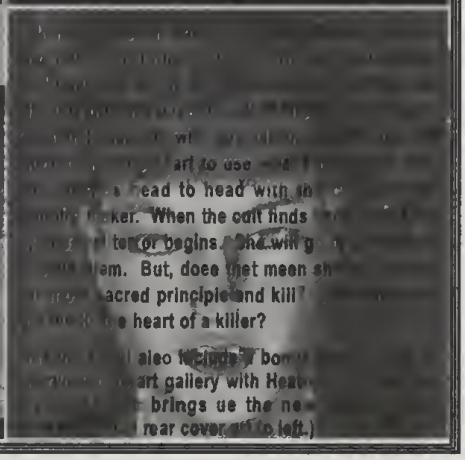
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The Grammarian's Five Daughters

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ONCE THERE WAS A GRAMMARIAN who lived in a great city that no longer exists, so we don't have to name it. Although she was learned and industrious and had a house full of books, she did not prosper. To make the situation worse, she had five daughters. Her husband, a diligent scholar with no head for business, died soon after the fifth daughter was born, and the grammarian had to raise them alone. It was a struggle, but she managed to give each an adequate education, though a dowry—essential in the grammarian's culture—was impossible. There was no way for her daughters to marry. They would become old maids, eking (their mother thought) a miserable living as scribes in the city market. The grammarian fretted and worried, until the oldest daughter was 15 years old.

Then the girl came to her mother and said, "You can't possibly support me, along with my sisters. Give me what you can, and I'll

By Eleanor Arnason
For Ruth Berman

Illustration by Steven Adler


Adler

go out and seek my fortune. No matter what happens, you'll have one less mouth to feed."

The mother thought for a while, then produced a bag. "In here are nouns, which I consider the solid core and treasure of language. I give them to you because you're the oldest. Take them and do what you can with them."

The oldest daughter thanked her mother and kissed her sisters and trudged away, the bag of nouns on her back.

Time passed. She traveled as best she could, until she came to a country full of mist. Everything was shadowy and uncertain. The oldest daughter blundered along, never knowing exactly where she was, till she came to a place full of shadows that reminded her of houses.

A thin, distant voice cried out, "Oyez. The king of this land will give his son or daughter to whoever can dispel the mist."

The oldest daughter thought a while, then opened her bag. Out came the nouns, sharp and definite. *Sky* leaped up and filled the grayness overhead. *Sun* leaped up and lit the sky. *Grass* spread over the dim gray ground. *Oak* and *elm* and *poplar* rose from grass. *House* followed, along with *town* and *castle* and *king*.

Now, in the sunlight, the daughter was able to see people. Singing her praise, they escorted her to the castle, where the grateful king gave his eldest son to her. Of course they married and lived happily, producing many sharp and definite children.

In time they ruled the country, which acquired a new name: Thingnesse. It became famous for bright skies, vivid landscapes, and solid, clear-thinking citizens who loved best what they could touch and hold.

Now the story turns to the second daughter. Like her sister, she went to the grammarian and said, "There is no way you can support the four of us. Give me what you can, and I will go off to seek my fortune. No matter what happens, you will have one less mouth to feed."

The mother thought for a while, then produced a bag. "This contains verbs, which I consider the strength of language. I give them to you because you are my second child and the most fearless and bold. Take them and do what you can with them."

The daughter thanked her mother and kissed her sisters and trudged away, the bag of verbs on her back.

Like her older sister, the second daughter made her way as best she could, coming at last to a country of baking heat. The sun blazed in the middle of a dull blue, dusty sky. Everything she saw seemed overcome with lassitude. Honey bees, usually the busiest of creatures, rested on their hives, too stupefied to fly in search of pollen. Plowmen dozed at their plows. The oxen in front of the plows dozed as well. In the little trading towns, the traders sat in their shops, far too weary to cry their wares.

The second daughter trudged on. The bag on her back grew ever heavier and the sun beat on her head, until she could barely move or think. Finally, in a town square, she came upon a man in the embroidered tunic of a royal herald. He sat on the rim of the village fountain, one hand trailing in water.

When she came up, he stirred a bit, but was too tired to lift his head. "Oy—" he said at last, his voice whispery and slow. "The queen of this country will give—give a child in marriage to whoever can dispel this stupor."

The second daughter thought a while, then opened her bag. *Walk* jumped out, then *scamper* and *canter*, *run* and *jump* and *fly*. Like bees, the verbs buzzed through the country. The true bees roused themselves in response. So did the country's birds, farmers, oxen, housewives, and merchants. In every town, dogs began to bark. Only the cats stayed curled up, having their own schedule for sleeping and waking.

Blow blew from the bag, then *gust*. The country's banners flapped, Like a cold wind from the north or an electric storm, the verbs hummed and crackled. The daughter, amazed, held the bag open until the last slow verb had crawled out and away.

Townsfolk danced around her. The country's queen arrived on a milk-white racing camel. "Choose any of my children. You have earned a royal mate."

The royal family lined up in front of her, handsome lads and lovely maidens, all twitching and jittering, due to the influence of the verbs.

All but one, the second daughter realized: a tall maid who held herself still, though with evident effort. While the other royal children had eyes like deer or camels, this one's eyes—though dark—were keen. The grammarian's daughter turned toward her.

The maiden said, "I am the crown princess. Marry me and you will be a queen's consort. If you want children, one of my brothers will bed you. If we're lucky, we'll have a daughter to rule after I am gone. But no matter what happens, I will love you forever, for you have saved my country from inaction."

Of course, the grammarian's daughter chose this princess.

Weary of weariness and made restless by all the verbs, the people of the country became nomads, riding horses and following herds of great-horned cattle over a dusty plain. The grammarian's second daughter bore her children in carts, saw them grow up on horseback, and lived happily to an energetic old age, always side by side with her spouse, the nomad queen. The country they ruled, which had no clear borders and no set capital, became known as Change.

Now the story turns back to the grammarian. By this time her third daughter had reached the age of 15.

"The house has been almost roomy since my sisters left," she told her mother. "And we've had almost enough to eat. But that's no reason for me to stay, when they have gone to seek their fortunes. Give me what you can, and I will take to the highway. No matter what happens, you'll have one less mouth to feed."

"You are the loveliest and most elegant of my daughters," said the grammarian. "Therefore I will give you this bag of adjectives. Take them and do what you can with them. May luck and beauty go with you always."

The daughter thanked her mother, kissed her sisters, and trudged away, the bag of adjectives on her back. It was a difficult load to carry. At one end were words like *rosy* and *delicate*, which weighed almost nothing and fluttered. At the other end, like stones, lay *dark* and *grim* and *fearsome*. There seemed no way to balance such a collection. The daughter did the best she could, trudging womanfully along until she came to a bleak desert land. Day came suddenly here, a white sun popping into a cloudless sky. The intense light bleached colors from the earth. There was little water. The local people lived in caves and canyons to be safe from the sun.

"Our lives are bare stone," they told the grammarian's third daughter, "and the sudden alternation of blazing day and pitch-black night. We are too poor to have a king or queen, but we will give

Walk jumped out, then scamper and canter, run and jump and fly. Like bees, the verbs buzzed through the country.

our most respected person, our shaman, as spouse to anyone who can improve our situation."

The third daughter thought for a while, then unslung her unwieldy bag, placed it on the bone-dry ground, and opened it. Out flew *rosy* and *delicate* like butterflies. *Dim* followed, looking like a moth.

"Our country will no longer be stark," cried the people with joy. "We'll have dawn and dusk, which have always been rumors."

One by one the other adjectives followed: *rich, subtle, beautiful, luxuriant*. This last resembled a crab covered with shaggy vegetation. As it crept over the hard ground, plants fell off it—or maybe sprang up around it—so it left a trail of greenness.

Finally, the bag was empty except for nasty words. As *slimy* reached out a tentacle, the third daughter pulled the drawstring tight. *Slimy* shrieked in pain. Below it in the bag, the worst adjectives rumbled, "Unjust! Unfair!"

The shaman, a tall, handsome person, was nearby, trying on various adjectives. He/she/it was especially interested in *masculine, feminine*, and *androgynous*. "I can't make up my mind," the shaman said. "This is the dark side of our new condition. Before, we had clear choices. Now, the new complexity puts all in doubt."

The sound of complaining adjectives attracted the shaman. He, she, or it came over and looked at the bag, which still had a tentacle protruding and wiggling.

"This is wrong. We asked for an end to starkness, which is not the same as asking for prettiness. In there—at the bag's bottom—are words we might need someday: *sublime, awesome, terrific*, and so on. Open it up and let them out."

"Are you certain?" asked the third daughter.

"Yes," said the shaman.

She opened the bag. Out crawled *slimy* and other words equally disgusting. The shaman nodded with approval as more and more unpleasant adjectives appeared. Last of all, after *grim* and *gruesome* and *terrific*, came *sublime*. The word shone like a diamond or a thundercloud in sunlight.

"You see," said the shaman. "Isn't that worth the rest?"

"You are a holy being," said the daughter, "and may know things I don't."

Sublime crawled off toward the mountains. The third daughter rolled up her bag. "All gone," she said. "Entirely empty."

The people looked around. Their land was still a desert, but now clouds moved across the sky, making the sunlight on bluff and mesa change. In response to this, the desert colors turned subtle and various. In the mountains rain fell, misty gray, feeding clear streams that ran in the bottoms of canyons. The vegetation there, spread by the land-crab *luxuriant* and fed by the streams, was a dozen—two dozen—shades of green.

"Our land is beautiful!" the people cried. "And you shall marry our shaman!"

But the shaman was still trying on adjectives, unable to decide if she, he, or it wanted to be feminine or masculine or androgynous.

"I can't marry someone who can't make up her mind," the third daughter said. "Subtlety is one thing. Uncertainty is another."

"In that case," the people said, "you will become our first queen, and the shaman will become your first minister."

This happened. In time the third daughter married a young hunter, and they had several children, all different in subtle ways.

The land prospered, though it was never fertile, except in the canyon bottoms. But the people were able to get by. They valued the colors of dawn and dusk, moving light on mesas, the glint of water running over stones, the flash of bugs and birds in flight, the slow drift of sheep on a hillside—like clouds under clouds. The name of their country was Subtletie. It lay north of Thingnesse and west of Change.

Back home, in the unnamed city, the grammarian's fourth daughter came of age.

"We each have a room now," she said to her mother, "and there's plenty to eat. But my sister and I still don't have dowries. I don't want to be an old maid in the marketplace. Therefore, I plan to go as my older sisters did. Give me what you can, and I'll do my best with it. And if I make my fortune, I'll send for you."

The mother thought for a while and rummaged in her study, which was almost empty. She had sold her books years before to pay for her daughters' educations; and most of her precious words were gone. At last, she managed to fill a bag with adverbs, though they were frisky little creatures and tried to escape.

But a good grammarian can outwit any word. When the bag was close to bursting, she gave it to her fourth daughter.

"This is what I have left. I hope it will serve."

The daughter thanked her mother and kissed her one remaining sister and took off along the highway, the bag of adverbs bouncing on her back.

Her journey was a long one. She made it womanfully, being the most energetic of the five daughters and the one with the most buoyant spirit. As she walked—quickly, slowly, steadily, unevenly—the bag on her back kept jouncing around and squeaking.

"What's in there?" asked other travelers. "Mice?"

"Adverbs," said the fourth daughter.

"Not much of a market for them," said the other travelers. "You'd be better off with mice."

This was plainly untrue, but the fourth daughter was not one to argue. On she went, until her shoes wore to pieces and fell from her weary feet. She sat on a stone by the highway and rubbed her bare soles, while the bag squeaked next to her.

A handsome lad in many-colored clothes stopped in front of her. "What's in the bag?" he asked.

"Adverbs," said the daughter shortly.

"Then you must, like me, be going to the new language fair."

The daughter looked up with surprise, noticing—as she did so—the lad's rosy cheeks and curling, auburn hair. "What?" she asked intently.

"I'm from the country of Subtletie and have a box of adjectives on my horse, every possible color, arranged in drawers: *aquamarine, russet, dun, crimson, puce*. I have them all. Your shoes have worn out. Climb up on my animal, and I'll give you a ride to the fair."

The fourth daughter agreed, and the handsome lad—whose name, it turned out, was Russet—led the horse to the fair. There, in booths with bright awnings, wordsmiths and merchants displayed their wares: solid nouns, vigorous verbs, subtle adjectives. But there were no adverbs.

"You have brought just the right product," said Russet enviously. "What do you say we share a booth? I'll get cages for your adverbs, who are clearly frisky little fellows, and you can help me arrange my colors in the most advantageous way."

The fourth daughter agreed; they set up a booth. In front were cages of adverbs, all squeaking and jumping, except for the sluggish ones. The lad's adjectives hung on the awning, flapping in a mild wind. As customers came by, drawn by the adverbs, Russet said, "How can we have *sky* without *blue*? How can we have *gold* without *shining*? And how much use is a verb if it can't be modified? Is *walk* enough, without *slowly* or *quickly*?

"Come and buy! Come and buy! We have *mincingly* and *angrily, knowingly, lovingly*, as well as a fine assortment of adjectives. Ride home happily with half a dozen colors and a cage full of adverbs."

The adverbs sold like hot cakes, and the adjectives sold well also. By the fair's end, both Russet and the fourth daughter were rich, and there were still plenty of adverbs left.

"They must have been breeding, though I didn't notice," said Russet. "What are you going to do with them?"

"Let them go," said the daughter.

"Why?" asked Russet sharply.

"I have enough money to provide for myself, my mother, and my younger sister. *Greedy* is an adjective and not one of my wares." She opened the cages. The adverbs ran free—slowly, quickly, hoppingly, happily. In the brushy land around the fairground, they proliferated. The region became known as Varietie. People moved there to enjoy the brisk, invigorating, varied weather, as well as the fair, which happened every year thereafter.

As for the fourth daughter, she built a fine house on a hill above

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The keys to the past lie deep within us—
so deep we may never find them.

SAILING THE PAINTED OCEAN

DIASTOLE

I STAND ON THE FIRST-CLASS PROMENADE STARING OUT INTO THE RED VELVET DARKNESS THAT surrounds us, the crimson waters that lick, foaming tongues, at our hull.

The stars, all gone.

The sun, no more.

The sky, black-red and faintly luminescent, a horizon forever on the cusp of a dawn that never comes.

And the heat, the stifling, humid heat. The thermometer upon the promenade reads 99 degrees. My navy blue uniform clings like a suit of leeches, and if I close my eyes I can no longer tell where my body begins and ends. I am disembodied, bloated, and rising, dissipating like smoke into the sultry air.

We have been lost at sea for nearly three days now.

I am ship's surgeon. Our ship, the *R.M.S. Journey's End*, left London for New York five days ago. On the third day, the frigid Atlantic vanished we know not where; gone, replaced by this nightmare seascape. Not one crewman noted the passing of the normal, the usual, the sane. The skies did not bubble and burn with explosions. German submarines did not threaten us with their torpedoes. A great hurricane did not blow us a thousand leagues off course.

Merely, the sky grew overcast, night fell, and morning never came again.

As if we had sailed, preoccupied, over the edge of the world.

The Captain, a taciturn fellow with a drooping, melancholy mustache, informs me that the telegraphist in the Marconi shack has heard nothing for days. His clicks and clatters meet with the profoundest of silences.

By compass, and at our current rate of speed, around 20 knots, we should have reached America by now. With no land in sight, and no stars by which to fix our position, we steam blindly on, fearful that

By Denise Lee Illustration by Janet Aulisio



some horrible calamity has struck the world, that some new doomsday weapon has turned the Earth dark and the waters red, as in the time of the Pharaohs.

A plague, born of this present war.

The more religious of the passengers have gathered amidships in the chapel, praying and singing continually, certain that the end has come at last: "And I saw, when he opened the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair; and the whole moon became as blood. And the stars of heaven fell upon the earth …."

Perhaps they are right. Perhaps it is the Apocalypse come knocking at our door.

Many of the six-hundred-odd passengers not given to prayer, the Lords and Ladies, the ladies and gentlemen, spend their time in the ballroom, stiffly sipping champagne, dancing as though the sun had never left the sky. Bach, Beethoven, the irreverent new Ragtime, the popular tunes of that Cohan fellow can be heard at all hours. The band plays in shifts, by order of the Captain.

The passengers of more humble means locked down in steerage either sit wailing in the halls or brawl drunkenly through the common areas, driven half-mad by their fear. Guards have been posted with orders to shoot any rioters attempting passage to the upper decks.

Here on the promenade, no wind tousles my sticky hair. The sea is calm, volcanic glass.

Dark shapes pass beneath us, huge and silent. Smooth. Headless, faceless, tailless. What manner of creature might they be?

They trail us everywhere, hell's version of dolphins. We seem to be in the midst of a great school of them: Krakens, Poseidon's hounds, Jules Verne's fancies, Jonah's imaginations from a bad digestion?

A light tap upon my shoulder. My nurse, a blue-eyed and freckled Irish lass, stands beside me.

"Doctor, we've a new patient in the infirmary, and very sick she is, too." The freckles stand out in dark, huddled clusters upon her paler-than-usual face. The infirmary already overflows with the hysterical and the heat-stricken; we have not slept in nearly 48 hours.

"I'll be down presently, Sister." I touch her arm lightly. "You've been a great help." She smiles and is gone.

After a moment, I follow. White-jacketed stewards, aproned stewardesses bearing trays laden with china and gleaming teapots, ladies in feathered hats, men in tail coats and starched shirts swarm around me. "Alexander's Ragtime Band" resonates off the bulwarks. Along the way, in the Grand Salon, I pause in front of a gilt-framed watercolor that I have passed, unnoticed, a thousand times before. Tonight, it becomes distinct, visible. A clipper upon a gray sea, its sails slack, the water still as slate. The eye of a blood-red sun stares dully at the frozen, wakeless ship.

Idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean …

Caught, as we are caught.

My throat gone suddenly dry, I move along.

SHE LIES ON A COT IN THE INFIRMARY, BEHIND A DRAPED white curtain, panting and quite overcome, eyes glittering with fever. She looks to be about 20 years of age. Her companion, a portly matron with a faint scar upon her chin, stands nearby twittering and tightly clasping her hands to her breast. Both wear brown broadcloth travel suits, with high collars buttoned tightly up silver-brooched necks, a style already several years out of fashion.

I crouch beside the girl on the cot. Her golden hair hangs limply to her shoulders. I know what the problem will be before I ask, yet ask anyway. "What seems to be the trouble?"

"Miss Hargrove fainted and had a fit," says the matron. "Oh, you must help her, doctor!"

Hargrove. I know that name, but the Hargrove I recall is a man, a physician.

I listen to Miss Hargrove's chest, hear her heartbeat, strong and regular, metronomic, like a tide.

I stand. "You must get her out of these clothes at once. It's heat prostration."

"Doctor, here? But that's improper!"

"But nothing. If you don't remove her clothing, I will."

The matron gives me a stony stare, but Miss Hargrove laughs, a crystalline, broken, tinkling laugh.

And then in a singsong child's voice, she begins to recite:

"The Queen of Hearts
she made some tarts,
all on a summer's day;
the King of Hearts
he stole the tarts,
and took them clean away."

She smiles at me. "I know where we are."

"She's beside herself! *Do* something at once!" cries the matron.

"It came to me in a dream," continues Miss Hargrove in a conspiratorial, secret-sharing voice, "last night." Something in her eyes holds me to the spot, listening, wondering.

"Here's a riddle, doctor:
How many angels on the head of a pin,
how many years in an hour,
how many lives in one heartbeat,
how many fields in one flower?"

Puzzled, I shake my head slightly.

She smiles again and continues her song. "The Queen of Hearts she made some tarts …."

I turn to the matron. "Get those clothes off, then sponge her down. Now!"

Far down the hall, her words follow me like taunting children.

"… and stole them clean away!"

IN MY CABIN, I LIE UPON MY BUNK AND TRY TO REST. THE porthole is heavily curtained, yet the red-black light invades even the darkest corners of the room. It seeps in, menstrual and suffocating, and stains the cabin walls. It stains my eyelids; even with closed eyes I cannot block it completely. Red-heavy, the night curls about my face like a cat; I take ragged breaths and strain for sleep. Footfalls and voices, whispering, whispering, echo in the passageway. I rouse myself and creep toward the cabin door, place my ear to the wall.

"That one, she's a loon …"

"Such a shame, and what with 'er father being a famous psychowhatsit, just like that Mr. Fraud …"

"I remember 'im—'e was on the last crossin'. 'E's got quite a roving 'and, if you take my meanin' …"

Lilting, feminine laughter. The voices fade.

I, too, remember Dr. Hargrove: a habitual smoker of cigars, a dark man, dark as an eclipsed sun. He attracted women like planets, and they orbited him, the wealthy widows, the bored wives, the accommodating stewardesses.

We spoke, on a few occasions, about the weather, the war. He lent me a copy of "Fragments of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria." And late one evening in the smoking parlor, he applauded Dr. Freud for the abandonment of his latest theory.

"Hysterical Viennese women. They imagine their fathers and uncles in their beds … respectable gentlemen, all. Who can believe it?"

"Quite so," I said. "Who, indeed."

The King of Hearts.

And Miss Hargrove, the Queen? Her high-buttoned collar tugs

at the edges of my thoughts. Such old-fashioned prudery in one so young.

A trained nurse, if I remember correctly, and her father's assistant.

The corridor is silent.

I return to my bunk. Exhausted, I finally sleep.

And dream, but cannot, when I wake, remember my dream. Something about a child, something I *should* remember.

OUT ON DECK, THERE IS STILL THE HEAT, THE CRIMSON MONOTONY, the silent creatures that follow us through the unending half-night. The only change, a new kind of vegetation that has sprung up in the waters around the *Journey's End*, huge pale leaves that hug the ocean's surface like horizontal sails or a thousand lily pads coalesced into one. They seem harmless enough. Even beautiful: slightly phosphorescent and shape-shifting, flat, otherworldly magnolias afloat upon a red punch sea.

Galled by our lack of progress, impotent, yet itching to be of use, the Purser and I lower a big bucket far, far below into the sea. Perhaps, through an analysis of the water, we might discover some new clue as to our whereabouts.

What we pull up fills us with wonder and dread: not red, but slightly golden sea water with one peculiar creature swimming in it, a strange spiral fish half the length of a man's arm. The spiral-fish turns and turns in the bucket, thrashing, corkscrewing about insanely. It has no eyes, no head, no mouth. Turning, turning. Pale as a toadstool.

"What is it?" says the Purser. He pokes it with a finger. The spiral-fish recoils, barely pauses, then resumes its incessant motion.

"One of Carroll's 'slithy toves,' I daresay."

We carry the bucket to the infirmary. I have read of such fauna existing on the floors of the ocean, odd blind things, unearthly and wan, never experiencing the light of the sun. Sea moles. Ocean bats.

But this specimen was discovered near the surface.

I vow to dissect the creature later.

IN THE INFIRMARY, MISS ALICE HARGROVE SITS QUIETLY UPON a cot, clad only in her loosened corset and bloomers; the matron snores on the cot beside her. My Irish nurse's notes indicate that her temperature is now normal. The fever and the heatstroke have passed, but the queerness has not.

She holds a peculiar doll upon her lap. The doll has no head; it wears a blouse, but no petticoats, and is naked from the waist down.

"Hello, doctor," she says, and drops the doll to the floor.

Her small pink tongue flicks out and moves so slowly across parted lips. A finger traces the curve of a breast, while her legs gape wide open. She stares fixedly at my breeches.

My warm face grows warmer, and embarrassment, pity, disgust fill me. I hand her a blanket, looking away.

"Cover yourself, young lady."

"Take off your clothes, cover yourself up ... Lor', how you carry on."

But she covers herself. And pouts, very prettily. A gentlewoman, with the ways of a common tart. I look at her face, young-old, innocent-used.

An ugly suspicion dawns.

Unthinkable. She is too young.

But I must rule it out, anyway, just to be sure.

With the help of my nurse, I puncture a vein in Miss Hargrove's arm with a shiny hypodermic. Purplish blood spurts into the glass syringe. We release the tourniquet. The deluge ends—

AN ALARM SOUNDS.

Shouts of "Fire!" and the sound of feet pounding across the decks. But I can smell no smoke.

Outside in the passageway, I catch the arm of a passing crewman, and he stops and flutters there like a kite snagged upon a tree limb.

"What in damnation is happening?"

"Fire, sir, in steerage. I tell you, they've all gone crackers down there. Torched themselves, they have."

I let go his arm, and he gusts off.

Chaos all around, a summer storm of eccentricities. A woman wearing three hats stacked one atop the other skips by, singing softly to herself; a boy with an open trunk beside him throws a pair of stockings, a shirt, a stuffed bear overboard into the sea. Near the rail, an elegantly dressed gentleman calmly scrapes at his hand with a broken champagne glass. Blood oozes from furrows in his palm, soaks into butterfly-and-thundercloud patterns on his once-white cuffs.

"Stop it, man!" I shout.

But he continues engraving his flesh as though he did not hear. I grasp his wrists. He resists, a frown upon his face. We struggle together. Finally I am able to pry the glass from his fingers. He stares at me, surprised, as though he has just wakened from some horrible dream.

"Go to the infirmary now," I say, gently, but with authority. "My nurse will fix you up straight away."

"Yes of course," he mutters, "of course. Thank you." With a befuddled, bovine look in his eye, he makes for the infirmary.

A scream, a woman's scream sounds piercingly along the deck. I whirl. The boy drops a book over the railing. There is no one else in sight. The book hits the water with a tiny splash.

I leave him to his work.

THE ANALYSIS OF HISS HARGROVE'S BLOOD IS COMplete. As I suspected, the telltale spirochete is there.

The *Treponema pallidum*. The pale turning thread.

An orgy of pale turning threads, a million twisting filaments, a vast infectious web spanning blood, heart, tissues, brain.

They called it lues, "Old Joe," the Pox, "the French Disease."

Tertiary syphilis. A disease of old whores:

Memory loss. Errors in judgment. Seizures.

Madness.

It takes 10 to 30 years to bloom, a slow, insidious process.

At first it merely laps at the consciousness, vast and seductive, like a tentative, shy sea. But inevitably the madness comes, a tidal wall of terror, obliterating, annihilating.

Miss Hargrove is only 20. She exhibits none of the classic symptoms of congenital syphilis: strange, misshapen teeth, blindness, idiocy, among others. She did not, therefore, contract the spirochete during birth.

Beside me, in the bucket on the floor, the spiral-fish turns.

What to do?

Oh, there is the arsenic cure, with its burning fingers, its numbness, its gut-wrenching pains. And its own kind of death.

Wearily, I lay my head upon the table. My heavy eyes close.

And I dream:

A DARK MAN AND A BRIDE STAND HAND IN HAND AT AN ALTAR. Mists dance around them. A faint organ pipes sickly music from far, far away.

The bride's small, childish hand trembles. The man grips it tight in his big fist.

Suddenly, I am beside her, in her, looking up into his face, scalded into my memory, a face I've known—

forever—

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If you could do it all over again what would you change? And how would the world change?

FORTITUDE

BY ANDY DUNCAN

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN BERKEY

MY LIFE STARTED OVER ON MAY 14, 1916 IN A hut in the foothills of the Sierra Madre, between Rubio and San Geronimo, about three hundred miles south of El Paso.

Pershing had put me in command of a party of 12, sent to town in three automobiles to buy maize for the horses. That accomplished, we devoted most of the day to my own project: We went looking for Villa's lieutenant, Cárdenas. That's what brought us, eventually, to the hut, where we found, not Cárdenas, but—I was informed—his uncle.

"*Por favor, Señor, por favor!*"

In the 30 minutes since Private Adams had unsheathed his knife, we had learned a number of things from this fat uncle: that he did not know any Cárdenas; that we were filthy American pigs; that


BERKEY

he had not seen Cárdenas in months; that the merciful Jesus would save him; that the Americans should be crushed underfoot like lizards; that he had seen Cárdenas a week ago, but not since; that our fathers were bastards and our mothers, whores; and, again, that the merciful Jesus would save him. All this in Spanish, though these bandits could speak English as least as well as I could. Spanish seemed to be a point of honor with them. I respected that.

"Santa Maria!"

The man heaved and strained against his bonds, trying to avoid the knife. His sweaty shirt pulled taut over his belly, and one button popped off to fall onto the dirt floor. I picked it up, rubbed it between my fingers. Brass.

"Madre de Dios!"

At that moment, with a sudden, sickening exhilaration, I realized something. I knew I had held this man's button in my fingers before. I'd heard these squeals and bleats, seen my men's sunburned, darting scowls, suffered the fried-bean-and-motor-oil stink of this miserable hut.

Since my youth I had been accustomed to sudden, vivid memories of lives in other places, other bodies, other times—memories that lingered, became part of my present self. I still could taste the urine I was forced to drink from my helmet when I was dying of thirst for the glory of Carthage; it was brackish and sweet in the back of my throat, and as real as my mother's orange punch, gulped at the end of a day's sailing off Catalina. That son-of-a-bitch helmet—it leaked like a sieve. But what I relived in that Mexican hut was not a life centuries removed. No, I relived a previous May 14, 1916 when I stood in the same hut, among the same men, holding the same button, and was the same person, likewise named George Smith Patton, Jr.

This was a first, a past life as myself. The initial disorientation passed, replaced by a giddy surge of confidence. I savored the moment. Would the feeling last longer than a second or two? It did. In fact, the memories became more complete, rushing into my head and filling it the way one's youth rushes back because of a piano tune, a whiff of gunpowder, a slant of light.

Some intellectual pissant would call this *déjà vu*. Any soldier would call it intelligence, and act.

"That's enough," I said. I flicked away the button. "Let's go."

"What about this rat right here, lieutenant?"

I leaned over him, lifted his bloody chin. "You're a good man," I said into his face, in Spanish. "You have been very unhelpful. Carry on." I saluted him, and walked out.

As we waded into the broiling sun, wincing at the glare off the hoods of the Dodges, I said, "Son of a bitch should get a medal. Too bad he's not in a real army. Saddle up, boys." The auto sagged sideways as I clambered aboard. Waller spat on his hands and went to work on the crank.

"Where to, Lieutenant?"

I could remember everything. Everything. I died at age 60 in a German hospital room, with tongs in my temples and fishhooks in my cheeks to keep my head from moving and crushing what was left of my spine—

No time for that.

"San Miguelito," I said.

"But Lieutenant," Adams said, "that ranch has already been checked out. Cárdenas ain't there."

"He's there now. Take my word for it, soldier. He's there." The Dodge farted and shivered and started to chug, and Waller jumped behind the wheel, shirt plastered to his back. I reached for my cigars as we lurched forward, tires spinning in the dirt. I knew the fat uncle would stagger to the door, rubbing his wrists and staring at us as we drove away, and when he did I waved and tossed him a cigar. Same as he had before, he just let it fall to the dirt. Lay there like a turd. Don't know when they've got it good, these Mexicans.

As we drove I remembered the gunfight that awaited us. I told the men exactly what to expect. They looked at me like I was crazy, but they listened. Hell, they were good soldiers. They didn't care whether I was crazy, they just wanted someone capable to tell them what to do.

Before, there had been some question about who actually killed Cárdenas—not in the papers, which gave me all the credit, of course, but in the ranks, since there was such a volley it was hard to tell whose .45 had done the job. We hadn't even identified Cárdenas until after it was all over. I'd wasted most of my bullets on some damn horse-rustling nobody. Not this time. If I had to live the next 30 years knowing I was doomed to a worse death than Hitler, then goddamn it, I was going to make use of my other knowledge, too. Shouting to the other cars as we drove along, I described Cárdenas and his horse and made it clear: He's mine.

San Miguelito was just the same. Mostly. Same sun like a hot rough hand squeezing your temples. Same four bowlegged hombres outside the gate skinning a cow, hide coming off in jerks and pops. They didn't even look up when the shooting started, when the three riders burst out of the gate and tried to outrun the Dodges.

That silver saddle made a damned impressive display. Hard to miss. I fired two shots, and he hit the ground like one of Caesar's winesacks. "BANDIT KILLER," the headlines had said, and they'd say it again.

As we searched the hacienda, Cárdenas's wife and mother stood in the hallway beside a new Victrola and its crate, staring at us. The missus, about Beatrice's age, rocked a baby in her arms. As I passed, the granny spat on me. I shot the lock off the chapel door and kicked it in to find three old ladies praying in the corner, holding up their hands to God. No surprises ... although: Hadn't the baby been awake before? Now its bundled silence made me suspicious. "Excuse me, señorita," I whispered, as I gently pulled back the blanket. It was, indeed, a baby: little wrinkled face, thick black hair plastered over its forehead, sound asleep. I teared up. I always had a soft spot for babies. "Congratulations," I told its mama, and the baby's granny spat on me again. More guts than some American boys, sad to say. More guts than that yellow bastard in Sicily would have, so many years in the future.

There was one more difference at San Miguelito, a big one. Before, I had climbed onto the roof to make sure no one was waiting up there to ambush us as we left. No one was, but I stepped on a rotten place and fell through up to my armpits—not a prime fighting position! Damned embarrassing, too. This time I walked a different

SINCE MY YOUTH I HAD BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO SUDDEN, VIVID MEMORIES OF LIVES IN OTHER PLACES, OTHER BODIES, OTHER TIMES...

route, gave the rotten place a wide berth, and kept an eye out for similar dark patches.

I was so intent on not falling through that I let a gap-toothed Villista get the drop on me. He darted around a corner, pistol in hand, and Adams shot him almost before I could look up.

As Adams searched the bandit's pockets, I stood there like a fool, dumbfounded for the first and last time in the Mexican campaign. "He wasn't supposed to be there," I said.

"Rats're liable to pop out from anywhere," Adams said. He flipped a gold piece into the air, caught it. "Good weight. Don't let it rattle you, Lieutenant," he added, and I resolved to give him a week's latrine duty for that. In addition to his commendation, of course. Fair's fair.

The rest went pretty much as before. As we drove off, about 50 Villistas came galloping up the ravine, and we fired a shot or two, but they didn't chase us far. Wasn't much of a race. God, the speed of the motored units to come! What Jackson could have done with them in the Shenandoah, I thought as dust billowed around me—or Napoleon on the steppes! I rubbed my shoulder, remembered my last backward look at the torches and spires of Moscow, felt again the Russian numbness that always lurked somewhere in my bones, even as my cheeks began to blister in this damnable Mexican sun. I tugged my goggles out a few inches and poked my face. Beneath my eyes was a sore borderline I could trace with my gloved finger. I let the goggles snap back into place. "Soldiers never fight where it's comfortable," I told Adams and Waller. "Think of all those Marines sweating it out in Haiti, or in Panama. Why, if they sent us to the French Riviera, it'd be a hellhole soon enough. How fast will this thing go, anyway?"



ALL THE CAMP BUSINESS FALTERED AND GOT quiet as our little procession drove in. We took it slow, giving everybody plenty of time to look, and many fell in with us, walking alongside. Cárdenas's lolling head on the hood seemed to return the soldiers' stares. By the time we hauled up the brakes and let the engines die in front of the command tent, dozens of doughboys were standing around, whistling and muttering *the Old Man did it* and nothing else I could hear. Two or three had potatoes and paring knives in hand. Never again, I thought, no more of that for me. Then Black Jack stepped out, standing ramrod straight as usual, a mustache for a mouth. The men and I stood in the autos and saluted, and then I stepped down and stood at attention and said, "We've brought in Cárdenas, sir."

Pershing nodded. "So you say, Lieutenant. Which?"

I grabbed Cárdenas by the hair and lifted. His eyes were black with blood, and his face was a little burned from the hood. Pershing acted as if he didn't know what to do with his hands; he finally put them behind his back and said, "Yes. That's him."

I let the head down gently so as not to dent the auto. Pershing looked at the other two bodies strapped across the other two hoods. He stepped a few paces toward the back of the automobiles and nodded when he saw the sacks of grain.

"General, there's a fourth bandit, but he's stowed in the back. No room, you see. He's the one who would have shot me, if Corporal Adams hadn't got him first."

Adams smiled and nodded, then looked mortified, as if he feared smiling and nodding were uncalled for.

"Good job, Corporal, good job, Lieutenant, good job, all of you," Pershing said, turning back toward his tent. "I'm sure commendations will be in order—and if the Army gave medals for dramatics," he murmured as he passed me, close enough for me to smell the jalapeños on his breath, "then you'd certainly have a chestful of those, wouldn't you, Patton? Report after you bury them. And Patton—you're lucky you remembered the maize."

How could a letter-perfect salute look so perfunctory?

I stood at attention and held my salute as he stalked away. I had been thinking in the Dodge about the strange opportunity afforded me, and now I wondered again, as I watched my idol stride back into the command tent, why I had been given another chance. Did Pershing have anything to do with it? Did Villa? I thought not. Even in childhood I had been convinced that my destiny was to lead a great army in a great battle in a great war, perhaps even the greatest war in the history of the world. That had proven true once, and I believed it would prove true again. No, I knew my destiny would not be achieved on some dusty road in Mexico, chasing the minions of a murdering border bandit. My destiny lay where it always had lain, in Europe, against the Nazis. But how much could I change along the way, and could I change it for the better?

Pershing vanished into the shadowy triangle, and the flap snapped down. Behind me a Dodge backfired, and my head jerked as if struck: Mannheim, December 9, 1945. Hap Gay said, "Sit tight." At 10 miles an hour, the loudest sound I ever heard. Silence. My head! Oh Jesus my back! The Cadillac's glass partition was spiderwebbed with gore. I sagged sideways, blood in my eyes, tried to wipe it away. Will it away. My arms wouldn't move. I couldn't sit up. My head lolled on Hap's shoulder. "Hell," I moaned. Drool on my chin. "Oh, hell."

The wind kicked up, blowing that acrid, needling Mexican dust into my nose and throat. Coughing, I forced myself back to the present, back to Mexico 1916, thinking: Even if I can't live a better life, I damn well can die a better death.

I dropped my salute, whirled, and bellowed for the ditchdiggers. Before, they had been found asleep in the back of the mess tent after a half-hour search. This time I had them front and center in five minutes flat, and they shouldered their shovels with wary glances, wondering how in the hell I knew.

That night, alone in my tent, I sat, knees wide apart, hunched over the upended trunk that served as a makeshift desk. I opened one of the tablets I'd been carrying since West Point: class notes, battle scenarios, quotes from Clausewitz, snatches of poetry, pledges to myself. "I hope I have got enough sence to be kiled in a great victory and be born between the ranks in a military funeral and morned by friend and foe alike," how old was I when I wrote that? Nineteen? Jesus God. I turned to a fresh page, creased the spine so that it would lie flat, daubed my pen in ink, and wrote a list.

Writing never had come easy for me, but I wrote without pause for a long time. I'd had all day to think about what I would do, what I would change. The list almost filled the page. When I couldn't think of anything else, when I could avoid it no longer, I sighed and wrote at the top:

DECEMBER 9, 1945

KAFERTAL. OUTSIDE MANNHEIM.

Then I circled it. I stopped, pen suspended. What could I add to that? "Look out for the truck!" or something equally inane? Just avoid the damn intersection altogether, Georgie. Hell, don't take a trip at all that day. The ink on the pen nib beaded, bulged. I dared it to fall. Thirty goddamn miles per hour. Not a soldier's death at all. I moved the pen to the right just before the drop let go. I heard it dot the trunk. Perfectly easy to avoid, really. Maybe the easiest thing on the list.

I heard something behind me: a faint scrambling, tiny claws on canvas. I set down my pen and reached for my knife. At night the desert creatures sought warmth and shelter. There, at the edge of the lamplight, a tail. Well, well, another Gila monster wanted to bed down with old Georgie. As I aimed, the tail stopped moving, as if the lizard knew what was coming. Tail looked to be about three inches—that meant the head would be just about—*there*. I threw the knife and the tail spasmed, lay still. I carried over the lantern, lifted the little bastard by the hilt of the knife (how its scales shine in the light, it's almost pretty), carried it to the tent flap, and flicked it outside with the others. Setting the knife aside to clean later, but not too far out of reach, I sat again on the rickety cot, picked up the pen. Hmm. Must be something else to list. Must be. But it was a damn good life the first go-round, wasn't it, Georgie? Hell of a good time. Look at that knife, would you. Not proper blood at all. More like some sort of oil, clotted with sand.

Damned scuttling nuisances. Five since Tuesday, all out front in a little ant-teeming pile. They were only lizards, but you'd think they would learn.

I MISS THAT MEXICAN CAMPAIGN. HELL, I MISS ALL THE CAMPAIGNS. So many battles worth fighting again.

"Isn't that right, Willie? Willie."

Damn dog can't sit still two minutes without sleeping, even in the damp and miserable Limey outdoors. Didn't they teach him any discipline in the R.A.F., before his owner got shot out of the sky? "Willie!"

I tap him with my crop. He looks up and yawns.

"Look alive, Willie. God knows we need some signs of life around here."

I tug the leash and he flops to his feet, raises one leg and waters the tread of a tank. The balsa wood darkens and streaks. "Good dog, Willie."

So many great battles, great campaigns.

Enemy scouts rustled in the hillside firs as I splashed my face and head with the cold foam of the rushing Rhine and stood up grinning, slinging droplets to left and right, daring some filthy goatherd to draw his bow against me, against Caesar, against Rome…

The pipes wailed like our women and the mud gripped my toes as the clans marched across the sodden moor, pacing off the minutes until we could lift our swords and shed our blood for the one true king of Scotland…

My granduncle put his callused hand in mine as we charged side by side and whooping across the northernmost ground claimed by the Seventh Virginia, hearing nothing but our blended gasping voices and the rush of tall grass against our legs before we leapt as one over that last stone wall—

God, that death was good!

But this is not Gaul, not Culloden, not Gettysburg. It's the first thing I wrote down, back in my tent in Mexico, the chief thing—besides the obvious—that I wanted to avoid: FORTITUDE.

But here I am. Stuck here in England once again, a puppet commander of a paper army, mounting a phantom invasion out of canvas and paint.

Willie depleted, he and I step into the road, lined for a hundred yards in both directions with facing rows of dummy tanks. Shermans, mostly. We stand there, all alone, blinking at the sunset. This has been one of those endless Limey midsummer days, when everybody but me looks up at the sun and pretends the day is over and retires for drinks and *din*-nah, with teatime still lead in their guts. What a place. Even the nights are fake.

Over my head is one of the 75-mm-sized "guns." I grab it with both hands and squeeze. It's Ike's neck, and Hitler's too. The tin buckles with a *plank*. When I let go, the barrel is crooked. Those few inches off true would be enough to send a shell a dozen yards wide of the enemy. If there were a shell. If there were an enemy.

"Dammit, Georgie, of course there's an enemy," I say aloud.

Willie snorts and wags his tail and nuzzles my jodhpurs. "Want to kill some Nazis, boy?" I scratch rough between his ears. "Want to kill some krauts?"

He lolls on his side and twitches one hind leg as I rub his belly.

"Well, first we've got to sit here a while. We've got to play pretend. Yes we do we do we do. We're just having a good time, a good good time, aren't we Willie, playing with our toys, playing war in our cold wet sandbox? Goddamn Eisenhower."

I stand and kick a splintered dent in the front of a tank. Its walls sway in and out, back and forth, like a tent in a sandstorm.

"If he thinks old Georgie is going to sit out Overlord a second time in this purple-pissing Limey Hooverville, well, then, Ike has another—"

"Be careful with the armor, please, General Patton, we've had rather a shortfall of nails."

A tall, short-haired woman stands behind me, smiling. I don't know her. She wasn't here before. No matter; that's increasingly common. No cause for alarm, no threat to my destiny. Brit, of course. Posture good. Uniform not regulation, but close: khaki shirt, khaki slacks, boots, a dark brown jacket with a military cut, a knotted scarf where a man would wear a necktie. Bare-headed, though, goddamn it. Helmet hangs from her belt, along with a host of tools and implements, none regulation. She laughs.

"Please don't be embarrassed, General. In the cinema we *all* talk to ourselves. It's the best rehearsal." She sticks out her hand. "I'm Madeleine Thomson—Maddy, on the set. I'm pleased to meet you."

I don't take her hand. I don't smile or speak. I square my shoulders. I look her in the face, glance down at her helmet, glance at the top of her head, and look her in the face again. I make a low throat-clearing noise, and Willie growls.

After a pause, the woman blinks, sighs, detaches the helmet and sets it on her head, practically covering her eyes. A size too big, at least; slackness in the quartermaster's office again. Then she salutes, and I salute in return. Hers is pretty sloppy—head bobs sideways to meet the hand, forearm is at a definite angle, and she drops it a good second before I drop mine—but I'm willing to make allowances, in the name of Anglo-American relations. Hell, I won't even bawl her out for the helmet. I'm a regular Cordell Goddamn Hull.

"At ease, Miss Thomson," I tell her. "You may say hello to Willie, if you like."

The little bastard is snuffling up to her feet and whining and wagging his whole behind. She gives me a dirty look and squats to rub the dog's neck, the tools on her belt rattling and jingling.

"My mum has a bull terrier. Ugly little buggers, aren't they? This one's friendly, though. A British dog, General?"

"Willie's an inheritance," I say. "His owner was a pilot."

She keeps looking at the dog, though her chin moves as if she almost glanced up. "Didn't make it, eh? Well, I'm sorry for you, Willie." He wallows, ecstatic, as she scratches his belly with increasing violence. "But you've found someone else. That's the important thing." She pats his flank, stands, yanks a hammer from her belt, and begins to pound the tank gun back into place, words coming out through clenched teeth as she flails away. "That's what a lot of us will have to do before this war's over, Willie—find someone else."

I clear my throat. "Believe it or not, Miss Thomson, that helmet could save your life one day. Bombs could start falling on this base any time. Real bombs," I add, glancing at the slapped-together monstrosities all around. Before, there had been no bombs, but it wouldn't do to let Thomson know that. Bad for discipline.

"Things have been remarkably quiet thus far, General. I've had closer calls in Birmingham repertory."

"That could change in moments, Miss—I'm sorry, Miss Thomson, I don't know what to call you. I don't know your rank."

"My title at Shepperton Studios," she says, delivering one last hammer blow, "is second-unit production coordinator." She steps back to study her handiwork. The gun is now visibly battered, but unbowed.

I wave my crop. "But you're in charge of all the Shepperton people on this site?"

She returns the hammer to her belt, hitching at her pants as she secures it. "All the carpenters, designers, painters, seamstresses—yes, General, to the extent they can be commanded at all, I have that singular honor. And may I add, General—" she folds her arms and glares. "—that despite the extraordinarily short notice, the dreary accommodations, the dearth of materials, the miserable weather, the inadequate blueprints, and the constant meddling memos from headquarters and from Intelligence, my people have done a bloody good job, for which they've received no official recognition whatsoever except the heel of your boot and the lifted leg of your, your, familiar, but I, for one, am quite proud of this—what's the phrase, General?—purple-pissing Limey Hooverville."

Now this *is* new. Before, my Shepperton liaison during the winter of '43 and '44 was a hangdog little Cockney fellow with less backbone than a Cornish pasty. I feel a ridiculous stab of optimism, a joy almost painful, like a bullet. I make myself scowl anyway. I slap my boot, once, with my riding crop. The woman stands a little straighter, slightly widens her eyes, but doesn't look away, and

keeps glaring. I'll be damned. Maybe I can turn this sorry-ass assignment around.

But then I feel a wave of weariness (even as I put my fists on my hips and hunch my shoulders and brace my legs, my prime chewing-out stance), and I think, you're no longer that young man in Mexico, Georgie. The changes, my God, they get harder and harder. Sicily was the last time I even bothered to try, and look how that turned out. So tired. So old.

But still the boss of this goddamn outfit.

"I'm not accustomed to being spoken to that way, Miss Thomson, by any American below the rank of Colonel, or by any Brit below the rank of prime minister."

Jaw a little tighter, she holds her ground. Damn. Lucky thing I'm not cheating on Beatrice anymore.

After a pause, I add, "So I suppose I'll have to call you Colonel, at least. At ease, Colonel Thomson."

I turn and kick another hole in the tank. The whole contraption shudders, but stays intact.

"So far so good," I say, turning back to her and smiling for the first time. "I do commend you and your crew, Colonel, for making a damned good start on this thing. But we have a lot left to do, a hell of a lot. When's the tour?"

She blinks. "The tour."

"You are no doubt aware, Colonel, that I am here for a guided inspection tour of Fortitude headquarters."

She looks at her watch. "And *you* are no doubt aware, General, that you were not expected until nine o'clock—" she catches my glance "—Ah, bloody hell—oh nine hundred hours tomorrow morning."

"I'm impatient. But I *am* here, and I *am* at your disposal, Colonel, so please show me this magnificent deception of yours."

She sighs, grins, shakes her head, plucks a large flashlight from that amazing belt—could that be a holster? Must make a note of how that thing is put together. Tank crews could use something like that. "Well," she says, "I suppose Agatha Christie won't solve the case while I'm away. Do you care for murder mysteries, General? Or do you get enough of killing on the job? This way. Down the column."



ILLIE SCAMPERS AHEAD, SNIFFING AT THE painted treads. The tanks loom on either side, their bulks somehow more realistic in the darkness. I almost could convince myself—no, no I couldn't, it's gone. Not now. The gravel beneath our boots is a good sound, a soldier's sound. Set a smart pace on gravel, and you sound like you're really going somewhere. Thomson sets a smart pace.

"So," I say, "what do you think of the boys at headquarters?"

Crunch, crunch.

"Let me put it this way, General. On a film set, I wouldn't entrust them with a clapper board. The injuries could be frightful."

"I don't allow officers to mince words with me, Colonel. You must speak freely and frankly."

"General, they are ignoramuses."

"I believe the phrase you're groping for, Colonel, is *goddamn worthless* ignoramuses, but you're definitely on the right track. Listen, Colonel—I'm not sure what you've been told or not told, but if I'm going to be even the figurehead in charge of this fake invasion, then that makes you one of my people, and I don't like for my people to be in the dark about their duties. Do you have any questions for me that the lords of St. James have not satisfied?"

"I do, General." She stops and switches off the flashlight.

All around us, in the absolute darkness, the base strains toward battle. In the pregnant silence I hear a crewman, his final inspection complete, shinnying out of a hatch and dropping to the ground—or is it just a garter snake?

"We are told that, so far, the Germans seem to be taking the bait. They genuinely believe that East Anglia is a staging area for a great cross-Channel invasion, aimed at Calais and led by you. Is that true, General? Have my people helped convince the Nazis this absurd story is real?"

Absurd—let that pass. "You have, Colonel, you have." I hope she can't tell that my eyes are closed. The breeze carries the smell of cordite, boot polish, sweat. "You have indeed convinced the krauts. But now you have a harder job. Now you have to convince *me*."

THE TANKS WEREN'T MOVING, AND SO I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO find out why.

"Goddamn it, what's the holdup back here?"

Despairing that I ever would be heard over the artillery and the machine guns and the engines, I half-strode, half-slid down the pulverized sod of the hillside and regained my balance on the edge of the trench where the whole ragged tank column, Renaults and Schneiders alike, had come to a halt. As I stood there weaving, pistol in one hand and walking stick in the other, I heard my batman, Private Angelo, reach my side, gasping; a strong lad, but I could outrun him any day.

Beneath me, several dozen infantrymen huddled in the ditch, arms over their heads. Their shovels lay every which way, like scattered kindling.

As I stood there, aghast, a shell blew several feet from me, spewing a gout of mud that spattered down on us all. I didn't flinch. I had expected it.

It was 10 AM on September 26, 1918, at the start of the Meuse-Argonne offensive. We were about 625 yards south of the village of Cheppy. If I acted as I had before, in about 45 minutes I would take a bullet in my left upper thigh, a life-threatening wound, and would lie suffering in a shell hole for two hours before being rescued; and so my Great War would end, and I'd be sent home to Beatrice for many years to come.

I knew all this. And all morning, all week, all month, I had pondered what I might do differently to avoid this calamity. Giving up my tank command was out of the question; it would leave a greater scar on my career than any bullet. Ignoring this holdup in the column, too, was impossible; our men needed relief, and fast. No, I knew that I had played a crucial role at this location, at this time. How could I be elsewhere? I was an officer. I had to do my duty.

Mouth dry at the thought of that oncoming bullet, I shook my head, raised my walking stick, and drummed on the steel plates of the nearest Schneider. "Let's get this column moving," I bellowed. "These tanks are needed up there in the field, not sitting in a goddamn ditch."

The hatch flung open, and out leaned a greasy-faced soldier with a big chew inflating his cheek. "Colonel, if somebody don't dig us a path through this trench, we ain't going nowhere." Bullets stitched the side of the tank in a diagonal. "Jesus!" the tank man cried, and ducked inside.

"We tried to dig 'em out, Colonel," one of the men in the trench called up, "but then the krauts got us pinned down."

"Pinned down, shit. You don't see them shooting me, do you? Where are your officers?"

"Dead, Colonel."

"You've got a new one, then. Come on, boys," I yelled. I holstered my pistol and picked up a shovel, held it out. "The sooner we dig a path for these tanks, the sooner we all can get out of here."

Slowly, the man who had spoken reached up and took the shovel from my hand, holding it as if it might explode.

"Come on, goddamn it," I cried again, holding out another shovel. "Let's get a move on. You don't have to dig the Panama Canal." Just as a soldier reached for the shovel, a bullet hit the blade, knocking it out of my hand. The soldier drew back with a cry. "Never mind that," I said, grabbing another shovel from Angelo, who was stacking his arms with them. "A lucky shot, that's all. No Buffalo Bills over there. They haven't got our range yet."

"Tell that to Phillips," the soldier said, snatching the new shovel from my hand. A dead man lay a few feet away, his eyes and mouth open, his arms still wrapped around his shovel. The soldier who

had spoken glared at me and fell to, digging like a madman. Good. Bravery works, and honor, but so do spite, and hatred.

"You'll all die like Phillips if we don't get this column moving," I said. By now Angelo was distributing shovels at a frantic pace; as I expected, the men were glad to have something to do, something other than panic. I stepped over to Phillips, tugged free his shovel, and offered it to a man beneath me, the last man to huddle against the trench wall, eyes wide.

"Come on, son. Take the shovel. Finish what Phillips started."

No reaction.

"Take the shovel, goddamn it!"

He gave his head two sideways jerks—shaking it, I presume.

"Take the shovel, you miserable son of a bitch, or by God I'll kill you *myself*," I cried, as I swung the shovel sideways, like a baseball bat, and slammed the side of his helmet. He howled and fell over, arms over his face. I raised the shovel high over my head, and he held out his hands and gibbered:

"I'll do it! I'll do it! Just hand me the shovel, Colonel, I'll do it! I swear."

"Good man," I said, and dropped the shovel into the dirt at his feet. I turned away, faced the reassuring geometries of the tank column, watched the bullets ricocheting off their iron flanks. Rotten coward. Would I have killed him? Didn't matter; the decision hadn't been necessary. He had done his duty. But what of *my* duty?

"Get these wagons ready to move!" I shouted, rapping on the side of each tank as I strode past. I rapped harder and harder as I went, shouted louder and louder, tried to clear my mind so that, when necessary, I could act without thinking, act like a soldier.

When the column started moving again, Private Angelo and I had an awful time ordering the infantrymen to march alongside. They knew the tanks would draw all sorts of enemy fire, including artillery.

"Sitting ducks, hell! That's what you'll be if you stay *here*. Not only are these tanks going to clean out those kraut nests that are picking you off, but these tanks are, furthermore, your only real cover, and as you can see—" I waved my stick at the Renault rumbling past "—that cover is *on the move*. So let's get going, and I mean now! Fall in! Follow me!"

So many back-of-the-line command-post generals never realize that on the battlefield the most effective order is "Follow me!" Those ashen-faced troops put their heads down, shouldered their shovels, and trudged along behind me, hoping against hope I knew what I was doing.

Before, that hope had been sorely misplaced. We had been marching to the *left* of the column, and had been cut to pieces by machine-gun fire. But staying in that damn trench, in the middle of hostile territory, was just not an option. So this time I led the men to the *right* of the column and hoped that even if I weren't spared, this time at least most of them would be.

As soon as we set off, I felt a new anxiety clutching me, not fear, exactly—no, that had been with me for weeks, and was still there, and growing, and I hated it—but a sort of fresh overlay of nausea, of uneasiness, a feeling not that something bad was going to happen but that everything was *already* bad, and I just didn't realize it, though at any moment I might, and then choke on the newfound ugliness of the world. I was attempting to change the day's outcome, of course. But I hadn't felt this way in Mexico, or in the months since, despite occasional … adjustments. What was different? I picked my way more carefully through the sucking soil of the battlefield. There was an ache in my joints, a seemingly sourceless pang like the one in the jaw that steals up on you, gradually pulses the news that while asleep you've been grinding your teeth.

We walked. How much time had elapsed? Two minutes? Three? How much time did I have left? Up ahead, one of the Schneiders met a 150-mm shell and blew up with a sound like a rifle-shot pumpkin. Flaming shards twinkled down on us, and the heat seared my face. But we kept walking, and the column kept rolling forward, detouring around the flaming wreck—that tight turning radius was serving us well today—rumbling ahead, guns firing, bullets pinging off the sides and whining past.

Each time I glanced around, Private Angelo and the others were still in line, though each time the line was a man or two fewer; and so I soon stopped glancing around. I tried to refocus my thoughts enough to be proud of those tank boys. I remembered my final orders to them:

Remember that you are the first American tanks. You must establish the fact that AMERICAN TANKS DO NOT SURRENDER. As long as one tank is able to move it must go forward. Its presence will save the lives of hundreds of infantry and kill many Germans.

Surely I should have been shot by now. Had I changed my destiny? Merely by walking on the right rather than the left? Was war that meaningless? I refused to accept it. Suddenly I knew: I was going to be shot, no matter what I did. But when?

"Strange clouds, Colonel," Private Angelo said. I looked up into that roiling brown sea of dust, smoke, and gas that for days had been our sky and saw ranks upon ranks of soldiers, their shapes outlined like those of men standing a distance away in fog, their faces indistinct and unreadable. Yet I knew who they were. They were my ancestors. They were my grandfather, my granduncle, and all the soldiers in our line, and all the soldiers who, at one time, I had enjoyed the honor of being.

They had looked down on me that other September 26, moments before I was shot, and they had given me a feeling of great satisfaction, a certainty that I was doing as they would have done, and that whatever happened, I was a true soldier, a man, a Patton. But now, looking up at those ghostly ranks, I felt only a tautness in my gut, a parched mouth, and shame.

"Angelo," I barked.

"Sir?"

"Maintain the march." Without looking behind, I darted between two of the tanks, emerged on the left side of the column. Head down and pistols drawn, I sprinted alongside, outrunning the tanks, teeth bared, looking only at the soupy, pockmarked, bone-and-metal-glinting mud beneath my feet, refusing to look into the sky again until—and then came the bullet like a fist to my left leg, and though I staggered on another 40 feet I knew I was down. I managed to holster both pistols before my wounded leg planted itself in the mud like a post and jerked me to a stop, forcing me to pivot and topple

A DEAD MAN LAY A FEW FEET AWAY, HIS EYES AND MOUTH OPEN, HIS ARMS STILL WRAPPED AROUND HIS SHOVEL.

in a slow spiral until I was face down in the flesh-smelling sludge. No pain, not yet, not in the leg. I heaved myself onto my back, spat dirt, and glared at the empty khaki sky.

"Hatred works, too," I said, and blacked out.

I came to just as a long white bone, a femur I think, moved past my eyes, followed by a canteen, several rocks, a mound of something rotten, and a brick-colored puddle that was rushing to refill itself, having just been disturbed by something, perhaps a foot. I couldn't breathe. I was upside down, bent double. Someone was carrying me on his shoulder. Then I remembered.

"Angelo," I said.

"Almost there, Colonel," he said. Still no pain, though I could feel nothing, move nothing, could barely lift my head. Now I was looking into a big shell hole, maybe 10 feet across and five feet deep, and the bottom of it was rising to meet me. Then I saw the damnable sky again, and Angelo was laying me down at the foot of the hole, trying to straighten me as best he could, which wasn't very straight. When he quit fussing, I was half sitting up like a sultan taking his ease, the back of my head pillowed by a tuft of needle grass.

"The tanks," I said.

"Still moving," he said.

I coughed. "The men."

He looked away. "Sit tight, Colonel," he said. "Once the tanks have shut off those machine guns, they'll be back for us."

He meant, they're all dead. "Not back," I said. "Forward." Then I blacked out again.



HEN NEXT I AWOKE, THE FIRST PERSON I SAW, standing atop the thrown-up dirt at the lip of the hole, wearing his awful plaid weekend jacket over his slate-colored courthouse uniform of vest and baggy trousers, was my father, who was transparent but aglow within, like a reconnaissance balloon. Papa was looking into the hole with a slight frown, vexed, as if he'd mislaid his glasses again. He loomed over Private Angelo, who lay on his belly and sighted along his rifle into the smoke.

I expected Papa to start patting his pockets. Instead he saw me, smiled, and punched the air with his walking stick by way of greeting. "Tell me something, Georgie," he called. As he headed my way, he stepped on Private Angelo's back; his foot just seeped in, then reappeared, whole. As Papa stepped into the pit he darkened considerably, and I saw his inward glow had merely been a flare guttering down the sky, briefly visible through his chest. "I'm curious. And think it over carefully before you answer." Having reached the bottom, he sat on nothing and leaned back with his fingers together, as he always did at his desk in the study at Lake Vineyard. "Do you ever—how shall I put it? I want to speak precisely, now—see people who aren't there? Images from the past, or of the future?" He leaned over to where his desk drawer would be, pulled on it, made familiar motions with his empty hands. "Drink, Georgie? No, of course not. Ah." He smacked his pale lips. "There's profit in grapes, but more character in grain. Visions, Georgie. There, I said it. Fine Episcopalian I am, eh, to be talking about visions. Do you believe in visions, Georgie?"

"Paralyzed" isn't the term; rather, I felt as if I had nothing left to move. I sensed, rather than felt, my life ebbing away through my wound, somewhere out of sight but vital, as a child senses his parents' despair. Yet I seriously considered Papa's question, even as I watched through his vest a rat that clawed out of the dirt, looked around, then scrambled back out of sight, long tail whipping about beneath Papa's watch fob. I felt I had been given a trick question, the kind that tormented me at West Point. Papa kept rocking back and forth, but without the comforting squeal of his chair. I missed it. I missed *him*. Sixteen months since I had waved to him on the dock from the Governor's Island ferry. Finally I said: "I believe in you, Papa."

He chuckled, nodded. A mortar exploded nearby. "Jesus!" cried Angelo, and clods rained down as Papa said: "Good answer, Georgie. But do you know, I never had visions myself. Never. Not even as a child, after the war, when I almost died with the typhoid. All I could envision then was the pitcher of water across the room, and that was certainly real, because I crawled across the floor and pulled it over on top of myself, didn't I?" He chuckled and rubbed the palms of his hands along his thighs, patted his knees.

Private Angelo slid down the crumbling slope on top of Papa, then crawled through him and leaned over me, examining my eyes and face.

"Now, other people in the family have seen them," Papa said. "You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, Papa," I said.

"Sorry, Colonel," Angelo said. "Can't understand a word you're saying. Follow my finger with your eyes, Colonel. OK? Please, Colonel."

"Why, Georgie, your step-grandfather, Colonel Smith, told me that once as he was walking through a hotel lobby in Sacramento, he heard a dance in progress behind a closed door and was drawn to open the door and look in—curiously drawn, he said, because he was not a prying man, as you know, Georgie. He was the very figure of a Virginia gentleman, was your step-grandfather."

"Shit," Angelo said, wiped his mouth, and scrambled back up the slope, kicking through Papa's head as he went.

"And he found that ballroom filled, Georgie, with officers in Confederate uniform, and their women and servants all in the dress of a generation before." Papa again made familiar motions, drank the air. "Excuse me," he said, covering his mouth and puffing his cheeks. "And the Colonel found himself in the middle of the room, and everyone had fallen silent, even the musicians, and one of the violinists—the Colonel would never forget this—was scratching his nose with a bow. What a thing for him to notice, Georgie, in the circumstances!" A splatter of guns and some not-so-distant shouts briefly drowned his voice as he examined his string tie "—stood there as each of the officers in the room passed before him in silence, single file, to bow and shake his hand and look him in the face, and he recognized each man in turn as a man who had served under him in the Shenandoah, and died there. *Died* there, Georgie."

"Hail Mary, full of grace," said Angelo, from the edge of the pit.

"But he wasn't afraid, Georgie. And when he came to himself, why, he was out in the lobby again, leaning against a wall and staring into a spittoon. A colored man asked him if the Colonel was all right. 'All right?' he replied. 'Why, this is the most honored day of my life.'" Papa chuckled and hitched up his trouser legs as he rocked backward and rubbed the side of his face, no doubt because the sun was high and hot through the study window that looked out onto the vineyards. No doubt Papa soon would reach up and pull the shade. "Now, you don't have to tell me a thing, Georgie, you never did," he continued, "but I've seen a certain look on your face many a time. Do you remember how Polvo used to jump up from the rug and look at something that wasn't there, and growl? That's the look I mean, Georgie, only you don't growl."

Private Angelo suddenly was at my side again, this time muttering and fussing with my leg, I suppose, though I saw only the top of his helmet and his mud-encrusted shoulders moving. I could look only at Papa. Angelo straightened, ripping a long strip of white fabric from a roll, then ducked again, muttering."Jesus God. Hold on, Colonel. This'll be over in a sec."

"Just look at me, Papa." I tried to laugh. Angelo reached up to my face and daubed at my lips with a handkerchief. "Look at me. Lying helpless in the goddamn mud."

Papa stiffened, brought his invisible chair back down to all fours with a *thunk* I could almost hear. "No public man uses coarse speech, Georgie."

I flushed—the first sensation I had felt since the shot, hot and full in the face. "No, sir."

"Helpless," Papa said, and looked away from me. Crawling through him, Private Angelo knelt at what might have been the cor-

ner of the study, tugged at his pants, and began to piss, spattering the dirt and himself.

"Papa, I couldn't even walk to the foxhole! The private here had to carry—" Papa looked back at me, stern. "Had to drag me," I finished.

Angelo moved well away from his muddy pissoir and sat in the dirt, arms clasping his knees, chin resting on arms, staring at me.

"Hold on, Colonel," Private Angelo whispered.

"Papa," I said. "Papa, I've been here before."

His eyes narrowed, and he leaned forward. "What's that, Georgie?"

"Here, in this shell hole. Years before. I'm doing it all over again, Papa, everything. I don't know whether it's my will or God's will or fate, but—I've got another chance, Papa."

"Another chance," Papa said, rubbing his chin and looking up, toward the east. His face flickered with reflected gunfire.

Private Angelo rubbed his face and muttered, "Christ Almighty, I bet they're ice fishing at home."

"You know, I was almost a soldier once, Georgie … more than *30* years ago."

"You *were* a soldier, Papa. You commanded 'A' Company at VMI. You led the cadets in Philadelphia, at the centennial parade."

Now Papa and Angelo talked at once, only not quite. They paused between sentences, and overlapped their speeches only slightly, so that the effect was of two impatient, self-centered people having a conversation, or of one person speaking and the next person translating. Papa was a trained public speaker and was telling a story long familiar to both of us, but Angelo was halting, less sure, speaking mostly to himself.

"Parades. That's not soldiering, son. Before you were born, before I met your mother, I signed up to join the Hicks Expedition, to fight in the Sudan against the Mahdi."

"You know what everybody in the unit says about you, Colonel? I'll tell you. We think you're the all-time eternal brass-plated bastard from hell."

"I read in the papers they were recruiting in Los Angeles, and during a recess in yet another interminable civil case I told my second to resume without me if I was delayed, and I trotted downstairs and ran down the street, coattails flying, to the hotel listed in the ad."

"But you know what else we say about you, Colonel? We tell all the other guys that you're *our* bastard, and furthermore we all think you're a damn good soldier."

"The recruiters had a suite with a potted date palm in the middle of the floor. 'Didn't know the dashed things grew here naturally,' the Sergeant said. He had one leg, and a chipped front tooth. 'Might have saved some money on the passage, what, if we'd left that bastard in Cairo.' I laughed and shook everyone's hand. They called me *pasha* Patton, which is a title of great respect in Egypt, you know."

"You ain't gonna die this way, Colonel. Not if we can help it. Not if I can help it."

"Oh, I signed my name to everything, I did. When I came home that evening the family met me at the door, saying Mama had fallen again, and before I hung up my hat and cane I knew that I would never go."

"I ain't leaving you, Colonel. I'll wait on our boys, or the Germans, whichever comes first."

"At Kashgil, that November, Hicks was ambushed, and the expedition was wiped out very nearly to the last man. I read the news on the streetcar, headed for yet another victory dinner for President Cleveland."

I coughed. "That was good luck, wasn't it, Papa?"

"Don't try to talk, Colonel. Want some water?"

"Yes, they were lucky, son. They died like your grandfather, and your granduncle. They died like men."

"Here you go, Colonel. Have a drink. That's right."

I spluttered. "No, Papa. I mean, it was good luck for *me*. Papa—what if you had died?"

"Hm? Oh, of course, Georgie, of course you're right. I have no regrets. I've been blessed with a wonderful family, Georgie, and a wonderful son. A son who's making the *most* of *his* big chance." He leaned forward and patted my leg, and I felt pain such as I had never known. I screamed.

"Christ! Colonel, shut up, sir," Private Angelo said, lunging toward me.

My father was getting up, patting his pockets, preparing to leave. "Papa!" I cried. "Papa!"

"Geez, he wants his old man now. Listen, Colonel," Private Angelo whispered into my ear, "you've gotta hold out just a while longer, and lay low and be quiet, you got me? We ain't got a hell of a lot of friends in this neighborhood, you know?"

"Papa," I said, my leg throbbing, my forehead sizzling. Papa was making his way over the lip of the hole, rubbing the small of his back. He looked back at me as Angelo upended his canteen over my face, blurring the slope-shouldered outline of the only Patton I had ever known.

I heard Papa's voice: "Another chance. Imagine that. Well, Georgie, maybe that's true for you. I hope it is. I hope it is true for one of us…." His last words were swallowed by the spitting, rumbling grind of tank engines, and by the shouts of what sounded like a thousand men.

"We're done for, Colonel," Private Angelo said, still swabbing my face.

Up on the crest behind him, where Papa had stood a moment before, was a tall, gangling, sunken-cheeked soldier through whom I could see nothing.

He turned, cupped his mouth, and called, "Criminy, Sarge! There's someone alive down here!"

I later found out he was one of a hundred troops of the 138th Regiment of the 35th Division, who had arrived on the scene a good 90 minutes faster than I had expected. The German resistance just seemed to melt away, they said. Good thing, too: My wound turned out to be even more serious than before; I wouldn't have lasted another half hour. My father would write to tell me that very day that he had been curiously restless, kept pacing his study, knew something was terribly wrong. But all I knew as I lost consciousness was Private Angelo's tearful, grimy face. The details of my deliverance came to me later; their implications, later still.

CHAOS, AS BEFORE. BUGLES. POLICE WHISTLES. A haze of gas. A rain of garbage from office windows. Rearing horses. Hundreds of people in the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue, slowing our advance—running across our path, or clutching at our reins and stirrups, or just standing there dazed. Some were Bonus, I was sure, but which? Screams and curses. A lunch pail bounced off the pavement once, twice, and tumbled away, spraying scraps. Up ahead, through the cherry trees, I could see the Capitol getting blessedly nearer. One of the trees swayed and fell, and a tank trundled into view, lurching upward as it rolled over something.

I long had dreaded my return to July 28, 1932. But now that it was here I was going to do just what I did before, by God: my duty. And, later, something more.

Ahead was a street-wide melee, as the infantry steadily pushed the front line of Bonus marchers back toward the Anacostia Bridge. It was no rout, though. These were American vets, all right; they scratched and struggled and threw punches and wrestled the whole way down Pennsylvania. I heard no shots except the thumps of the gas canisters, but I saw plenty of doughboys using the butts of their rifles. No bayonets in use, not that I could see, not yet.

A pack of a dozen Bonus boys, all in uniform, ran toward me. Somehow they had made it past the infantry. Some had bloody faces. Two were waving shovels, and one a crooked umbrella. They looked wild-eyed, crazy. I whistled to the riders on my left and right and we charged. The veterans wheeled so fast they skidded, stumbled, then ran back the way they had come, cursing us the whole way. We swept them along with the flats of our sabers. I gave one straggler

a good smack in the pants, and he yelled, "I'm going, General! I'm going! Don't hit me!"

General. Promoted by a goddamned Bonus marcher. I slowed to a trot and stared down the crowd lining the sidewalk. What shocked, snarling, hateful looks, what howls and oaths—as if I were the Lindbergh kidnapper, or Scarface Al. And from Americans! Watching American troops do their duty, sweeping an organized Bolshevik occupation force out of Washington! I was glad to wield the broom—as glad the second time as the first.

A rock, I suppose, struck my helmet, knocked it sideways; I righted it immediately, and kneed my horse forward. Ahead, a stray cloud of gas made a hotel awning bulge upward. From beneath it a man in uniform stumbled into the street, holding his throat: a goddamn doorman. A horse reared; its rider yelled: "Out of the way, sir! Out of the way, please!" The doorman staggered to the sidewalk, clawing at his epaulets. Two fat men in business suits grabbed him, hauled him through a revolving door, glared back at me.

The gas was dissipating quickly in this windy canyon, yet my eyes were streaming. I touched the mask hanging from my saddle, tapped its goggles, decided against it. Some officers, I knew, had donned their masks before they were a block from Fort Myer.

Above me, looking down from the office windows, a hundred anguished faces in a row. "Shame!" cried a woman's voice. "Shame!" I selected a woman in a wide white hat, saluted her, and rode on.

Coming down a side street toward Pennsylvania was a lone tank, an old Renault. Hadn't that idiot been issued a map? A gang of boys in knickers chased the tank, hanging all over it, throwing round projectiles that splattered off the plate. Apples. Still in service after 14 years—amazing.

Much later, after the charge across the bridge, after the clearing of the Flats, after the fire that swept "Hooverville" into ash, after it all was left to the newspapers and the politicians, I was standing, as before, talking to several of my fellow regimental officers at the picket lines, when I heard the footsteps on the sidewalk behind me: two men marching smartly, one man shuffling. Once again, without turning, I knew who he was.

In the wards, after Cheppy, I had talked to boys who were bayoneted. They described what it was like. I had begun to feel something similar whenever I thought of Private Joe Angelo.

I turned to face him. He was the same. His face and uniform were filthy, matted with grass and mud and flecked with—blood? Had he been dragged? The Distinguished Service Cross was in place, though. Crooked, but there. Runnels of sweat, or tears, had smoothed the dirt on his cheeks. I couldn't meet his gaze, God help me, not yet. Never noticed before how bowlegged he was, I'll be damned; in Virginia they'd say you could throw a hog through his legs.

"Major Patton," said the Sergeant at his right elbow, "this one says he knows you, won't come quietly until he speaks with you—begging your pardon, sir," he added, misreading my expression.

Before, my shame had turned to embarrassment and anger. I had snorted: "Sergeant, I do not know this man. Take him away, and under no circumstances permit him to return!"

And then I had turned my back on Joe Angelo, who did not speak, and who went so quietly that I heard nothing as I stood there chatting with my fellow Cavalry officers about what a sad spectacle it was, a damn good enlisted man gone to rack and ruin, hat in hand with the Bolsheviks, each word welling up like acid in my throat.

Not this time. But the hell of it was, as I stood there, looking at Joe Angelo again, knowing this was my second, perhaps last, chance, I felt those very same words roiling out; I very nearly said them. "Sergeant—I mean, I—" I had to clench my jaw, get hold of myself (discipline or death, Georgie, discipline or death), force myself instead to say the words I had practiced so bitterly, so often.

"I *do* know this man, Sergeant." Damn my throat; I was barking like Willie, Willie who wasn't even born. "This man is Joe Angelo. Fourteen years ago, Sergeant, in a hole in the ground near a pissant crossroads in France, Joe Angelo saved the life of a Cowboy lieutenant Colonel who let himself get shot in the ass while daydreaming." I twitched a smile and forced myself to look at him. I hoped it was a smile. "Hello, Joe. I'm sorry we're on opposite sides today."

I sounded like a Latin-school brat quavering his way through "The boy stood on the burning deck." I could not read the expression on Angelo's face. I had to go on, quickly, before I lost the energy, before the other words took over. "And Joe, while I don't agree with your methods out here—all this agitating and public disturbance and socialism and all—I want you to know that, well, if there's anything Beatrice and I and our family can do to help you out, and your family, then Joe, you only have to say the word. I don't hold with handouts, but that, Joe, that wouldn't be a handout, that would be—I'd say that would be something like justice. And I'd be proud to do it. *We'd* be proud to do it. I hope you believe that, Joe."

The Capitol seesawed. I fought to stand upright.

Joe swallowed once, twice. Damn, he had to be scrawnier than at Cheppy, else how the hell could he have carried me even a foot? Sawed-off little bowlegged runt?

"I do believe it, Colonel." He sounded raspy, too. He cleared his throat, laughed a little. "I surely do."

I was aware of the officers behind me, staring at my back the same way the smug bastards used to stare at me at West Point, when I gave the whole parade ground holy hell while they stood behind me and disapproved, with their thin lips and their narrow eyes, but had nothing to say. To my face, disapproval is nothing, it's dust, it's lint, it's the prick of a cactus, but from behind it's a strong enemy hand pushing, pushing. The hell with West Point; the hell with *them*. But the words were harder and harder to say. I thought I was going to choke, or vomit.

"Can't call me Colonel anymore, Joe," I spat out. "I'm a Major, now. Got busted down after the Armistice. Too many officers." I glanced sideways. "More than any sane army needed."

He flashed a smile that did not reach his eyes. "Yeah, peace is hard on everybody, huh, Colonel?"

"Oh sweet goddamn, that's true," I said. "Yes sweet Jesus yes."

"Uh, Major, the truck is waiting—"

"I just wanted to see you, Colonel." Joe took a deep breath. "I just wanted to have a good look at you. I wanted … I just wanted …"

He seemed to be having trouble finding words, too. I held out my hand. Would it feel clammy to him? "I'm glad you found me, Joe."

He took my hand, held it limply for a second, then let it go. "Colonel, I—"

"Please, come see us in Fort Myer, have dinner with us. Bring your family. If they're home in—New Jersey? I thought so—we'll bring them in, too, on the train."

"Colonel, I want to say—"

"Take care, Joe."

"Don't worry about me, Colonel. Shit!" He flinched from the Sergeant's hand on his shoulder. "Wait a minute. Hey, Colonel. How about this? I got an idea, see. What do you think of this idea, huh?" As he kept shrugging off the increasingly insistent guards, tried to wriggle away, he did a sort of shimmy dance, keeping his gaze on me, and talking more quickly, as if energized. "When I get out of jail, because I guess I will get out, right? One day. Well, when I do, I'll go on back to New Jersey, back to my wife and my kids, no job or nothing, no pension or nothing, empty-handed, just good old Joe, good old Dad with nothing in his pockets as usual, that is if they're still there, oh Jesus," and his voice broke, "if they're still there waiting on me, waiting on fucking nothing, and then maybe we'll all get together, the Angelos and the Pattons, for a nice little *dinner*, maybe with caviar and crackers and, and, hell, what do rich people eat? Fucking finger sandwiches, but in the meantime, Colonel—let go of me, you fathead son of a bitch—in the meantime, Colonel, do you know what you can do? Huh? You can go straight to hell! How about that?"

I couldn't speak. I couldn't move. I stood there watching the two Sergeants, enraged now, haul Joe Angelo away.

"That a fair deal, Colonel? Huh? That a fair goddamn deal?" He yanked a hand free, ripped off his medal, and flung it at me. It bounced off my chest, I suppose. I didn't feel it, but I heard it plink

against a button, and then the pavement. "Let go of me. I said I'm going, goddamn you! For God's sake! Can't a man walk?"

Muscles taut and aching, forearm barely able to bear the weight, I saluted. I held it after the little man was invisible in the crowd, for as long as I could distinguish the Sergeants' helmets bobbing. Only when they were two bubbles among hundreds did I drop my trembling hand, and then slowly.

I turned back to the officers and croaked, "If you'll excuse me, gentlemen."

They broached goodbyes as I walked away, concentrating: shoulders back, left foot, right foot, left. Alongside the walkway was a waist-high rail, flowering shrubs on the other side. Hydrangeas? I gripped the rail for support as I walked, hauling myself along left-handed. I heard murmurs behind me, something about "the Old Man." Old Man to my soldiers in Mexico at 30, now Old Man at 46, and 13 years to go—No! Mustn't think about that. Tendrils of gas seeped out from the shrubs, through the railing, curled around my ankles, made my eyes tear up. I had to say the words, I had to. My throat was on fire. I whispered, fast and desperate, mouth foamy dry. "Sergeant, I do not know this man. Take him away. Take him away, Sergeant, I do not know this man." I passed a flaming barrel. A doughboy fed it leaflets, snatched them one by one from a crumpled bundle beneath his arm.

VOTE THE BONUS
BONUSES NOW
BONUS OR A JOB

The doughboy gave me a queer look. The heat licked my face. I clasped my forehead, forced myself to suck in air. Discipline, Georgie, discipline! Focus! Some changes would be easy, others, not. I knew that. Destiny is hard. Adjusting it is harder. Harder with every passing year. I knew that. I could live with that. Fair deal, Joe, fair deal. "Take him away!" I choked, and kicked free of the clutching gas.

LEAVE A REAL ARMY CAMP AT NIGHT, AND YOU CAN WATCH IT vanish in the rear-view mirror. Even under blackout conditions, there's always something to see. But when I say goodbye to Thomson, and Mims wheels the Mercedes along the gravel turnaround, and Willie scrambles, whining, into my lap, I glance up and I see nothing in the mirror but blackness. Turn your back on it, and all of Fortitude disappears, buildings and tanks and personnel and Thomson too. If only I could forget as easily.

It's a long drive back to Peover (who but the Brits would give a town a name like that?), and I don't sleep as well on the road as I used to. That's an understatement. I don't sleep well *anywhere* anymore. The closer I get to that left-turning truck in Germany … but no matter. As Willie snores in my lap, sides heaving beneath my crossed forearms, I open my old notebook from Mexico and look at all the items I've crossed off, just to reassure myself that this second life was worth living, that I might avoid that truck yet. My eye lights on the name

DICK JENSON

and I grin. That's one achievement, surely. On April 1, 1943 a Junker squadron dropped several bellyfuls of five hundred-pounders on the First Armored command post in the Wadi Akarit, north of Ei Hamma. I had been expecting the attack, of course, and I had taken steps to prevent the only casualty. Before, everyone made it to the foxholes OK, but one of the holes suffered a hit—the one that contained only one man, my young aide, Dick Jenson, whom I had sent out there, God help me, for some frontline experience. Not again. I made sure Dick was with me all that day, behind the lines, and so I never had to write Dick's mother that letter, and instead of someone else getting killed in Dick's place (which I had half-expected but accepted as a necessary risk), the Junkers didn't do any harm other than rearranging Colonel Benson's furniture, which I'm sure needed it anyway, and giving that nattering old woman Omar Bradley a lingering earache, which is a kind of justice, if you ask me.

Got a card from Dick just the other day. He's quite the hero back home, his wife's sulking because all the girls want to dance with him, leg brace or no. Four days after the Junker attack, Dick stepped on a mine outside Sidi-Bou-Zid—well, actually, the poor bastard to his left stepped on it. We thought that stretch of road had been swept clear but, what the hell, can't predict everything.

Feeling a bit better, I close my notebook, settle back, and peer out the window, where a white stone wall has been twisting alongside for what seems like an awful long time.

MOUNT ETNA WAS HAZY IN THE DISTANCE August 10, 1943 when we skidded to a stop along a muddy ditch outside the 93rd Evacuation Hospital. Why hadn't I just let Sergeant Mims drive past? Had I even intended to call halt, or had it just—happened? I still didn't have to go in. But the very thought of ordering Mims forward made me feel faint, abruptly feverish. I suppressed a gasp, dug the fingernails of my left hand into the palm of my right until the landscape stopped shimmering.

Changing my future had become so difficult, so painful, I had almost given it up. But today I had to do something. I had to.

It was a breezy day, and the three-star pennants fluttered nicely even when the jeep was standing still. Someone must have seen them and alerted the receiving officer, a Major, who came running, white coat flapping, while I still was in the jeep dithering and taking in the view and feeling grateful that I could regain my strength sitting down.

"Yes, General, yes, delighted to have you look around, visit with the men, a great morale-booster, we're very honored …"

Before I followed him in, feeling better but still a little shaky, I looked back at the old volcano and thought, "Mims, better you should have driven me to the edge of the crater and over the side."

"You'll have to duck your head here, I'm afraid, General. That's right. *Attention!*"

Ah, hell. If I had let Mims drive on by, I'd have been running away from a fight, wouldn't I? And who's to say I wouldn't have run into the same goddamned malingerer, 10 miles down the road? No, much better to face my future, and stand up to it.

ALL AROUND THE WARD WERE MEN IN CHAIN MAIL, REDCOATS, BEARSKINS, TRICORN HATS, ALL WRITHING OR GASPING OR CLUTCHING THEIR WOUNDS…

Sicily might have been cleaned free of krauts all the way to Messina, but as I walked through those canvas wards, chatting and smiling and patting boys on the shoulder, I was as tense as I had been during the invasion. As if I were braced for one of the patients to lift a pistol and shoot me where I stood. Goddamn fear! Goddamn nerves!

"How are you feeling, soldier?"

"I'm all right, General. Don't you worry about me."

"Oh, I'm not worried about you, soldier. I'll let the goddamned Huns worry about you, when you're back on your feet again with a gun in your hand. Right?"

"That's right. You tell 'em, General."

More differences. Before, there had been a soldier with staring eyes, his face badly burned, who lay on his belly in a cot and kept moving his arms and legs as if crawling. "Poor soul kept that up all night," the nurse had said. But now I didn't see the wretch anywhere.

"What happened to you, son?"

"Hell, General, I was just in the wrong place at the wrong time, that's all. The docs are fixing me up, though. I'll be back out there with you soon."

"I'm glad for that, son. You're a fine soldier, and you and I have a lot of killing left to do. You ready for that?"

"You say the word, General!"

"God bless you, soldier."

Others were where I expected them. Here was the poor bastard with his head half blown off, who couldn't talk but who reached out to shake my hand and then gave me a thumbs-up sign. Here was the nurse who gave me her pan and washcloth and let me bathe an unconscious man's fevered forehead. "When he comes to, he's never gonna believe it," she kept saying. "Never in a million billion years." Here was the big nigger comedian, bandaged head to foot, who made us all laugh when he said, "Hey General—you oughtta see the other guy."

"God, I love my army!" I said, and those who could cheered.

When I entered the last ward, by now at the head of a little jostling procession of doctors and nurses, I immediately looked to the bunk where I knew the yellow bastard would be. He wasn't there.

Could it be? Would I be spared?

"Where you from, soldier?"

"South Carolina, sir."

"South Carolina, eh? You know, I met a soldier the other day from South Carolina, and he said a southern boy could shoot even better than he could screw. Do you agree with that, soldier?"

"I'll let you know, General. I need to do a little more shootin'."

"You do that, soldier. You do that." Laughing with the rest, I turned to the cot across the aisle.

And there he was.

Different cot, different place in the ward. Otherwise the same.

As before, he wasn't a small man. Not scrawny and weak-looking at all. Big, hearty fellow. Standing, he'd have been my height. He sat on the edge of a cot, feet on the floor. His hands clenched his knees. No bandages, no hospital dress at all. He was in full artilleryman's uniform, from helmet to boots, every inch regulation. Needed a shave, though. One dark eyebrow smeared across his forehead. His eyes were screwed shut, and his lower lip was sucked in. His body was as rigid as if sitting at the trigger, awaiting an order to fire.

I thought of all I could avoid: the Drew Pearson broadcast, the headlines, the demands in Congress for a court-martial

to curse and slap and physically attack a man in his hospital bed, my fellow Senators, is not the act of a General but the act of a coward

the endless chewings-out from Ike

a miserable coward

and I told myself, let it go this time, Georgie, let it go. Just walk past him. Don't even look at him. That's right, Georgie. Just keep on walking.

The bones in my knees and hips seemed to grind together. I bit my tongue to keep from crying out.

I stopped. I turned to him. I fought to keep my voice low, controlled, polite. Polite!

What did you do in the war, granddaddy?

Kissed all the ass in Europe, honey, Yankee ass and Limey ass, brass ass and khaki ass, just like I was told.

"What's your name, soldier? What's your unit?"

His name was Paul G. Bennett. He was 21 years old. Private, First Battalion, Seventeenth Field Artillery Regiment. Hadn't my family sent me all the clippings, for Godsake? But as before, he told me nothing. He just sat there.

I reached out—gently! gently! I pictured Beatrice's neck at 16, the day of the Catalina picnic with the Pattons and the Ayers, the first photograph with both of us in it. That's how gently I reached out. My fingertips rested, trembling, on Bennett's shoulder; I almost stroked it. I gave him a push so small it was little more than a mental pulse down my arm from me to him. "Hello. Soldier? Can you hear me?"

"Yes, sir," he quavered. His bottom lip, before it vanished again, was bloody.

"That's a bad lip you got there, son. Is that why you're in here? That why you're in the hospital?"

I just want to hear him admit it, I told myself. I just want to hear him say he's scared. I want the brave men around him to hear his yellow mouth. Hell, the papers said he had begged to stay with his unit, that his battery surgeon was the one who ordered him to pack it in, sent him to the medics. Why didn't he say that? He could if he wanted to. "Hell if I know why I'm here, sir," he could say. "Doc said I needed a checkup. I'll be back out there killing krauts before you know it, General." It'd be so damned easy. Hadn't he been listening to the others? Didn't he know what he was supposed to say?

Bennett—no, I wouldn't think of his name, he hadn't earned it yet—the yellow soldier opened his mouth, jaw dropping like a pin had been removed. It gaped open. I leaned closer. From the back of his throat a word was welling up, a slight sound like a distant scream or a rusty hinge. I stooped there, quivering, waiting.

Beatrice wrote me once that when little Georgie was learning to talk, he'd get hung up on a word, and he'd stand there holding onto her deck chair, mouth open, trying to remember what the sound was, and she'd sit there in suspense trying to will him to say something, anything. I never knew what the hell she was talking about until that moment, trying to coax a word or two out of that yellow rat in Sicily. Different words. Even "Screw you, General" would have made me happy.

Something—anything!

"It's my nerves," he said.

The same goddamn thing all over again!

"What?" I yelled. "What did you say?" Behind me a nurse gasped.

"It's my nerves, General. I just can't stand the shelling anymore. I can't." Eyes still shut, he started to cry, with a low and maddening whine like Willie at the door, wanting to be let out. A noise fit for a dog.

I knew what I

goddamned coward

wanted to say and needed to say

yellow son of a bitch

and had said before

shut up that goddamned crying

but I remembered the headlines, and the hate mail, and the packs of reporters pecking at my daughters' windows, and my orders from Ike's hatchetman to crawl

disgrace to the Army

on my belly to every last unit in the Seventh Army asking forgiveness

back to the front, my man

and then the months of doing nothing, and then finding out that my next "command"

ought to be lined up against a wall and shot

was to lead a nonexistent army in a nonexistent invasion—and *that* only because the last person who still believed I could do the job in combat was Hitler.

No. Not again. Shut up, Georgie.

God damn you

Just shut up.

"I can't," the miserable rat whispered.

I leaned forward farther, gently laid my hands on his shoulders, my mouth against his left ear. He flinched, the corner of his mouth jerked, but he didn't resist. His whiskers pricked my cheek. He was a smoker. The pain had returned, spasms in my back, my arms, my legs. Mother of mercy, Georgie, don't fall on the boy. Anything but that. So low that not even the man in the next cot could catch it, in a desperate rush to speak before my voice gave out, I breathed into his ear:

"You worthless, Godless, pitiful, no-dicked bastard, in another lifetime I slapped the living shit out of you, you disgraceful excuse for a soldier. And I'd like to do it again, rather than let you sit here pissing on all these good brave men around you. This time, though, I'm going to walk away from you, the way I'd walk away from a turd I left hot in a ditch, and maybe my life will be the better for it. I don't know. But whatever happens to me, you wretched stinking traitor, I hope what you get is worse."

I kissed his ear, let go of him, and jerked to a standing position, wiped my mouth with the back of my hand. He sat there as before, still trembling, but not crying anymore. As far as anyone else in the ward knew, I had spoken words of private encouragement—and by God, I had! Sure I had. More than he deserved. I turned to go. A few inches' movement, but so, so hard. I felt the cords in my neck pull taut, resisting. The pain wasn't the worst of it. Turning my back on that soldier was like turning my back on myself.

"I just can't," he murmured.

Where the South Carolinian had been, lying in the bed in front of me, was my granduncle, Col. Walter Tazewell Patton, a bloody bandage over most of his head but his good eye shining. His Confederate grays were spattered with red and with orange clay. Sitting beside him in a canvas chair, likewise staring at me, was my gray-clad grandfather, George Smith Patton, bandaged hand on the hilt of his saber, splinted leg sticking into the aisle so that I'd have to step over it to reach the door. Across the aisle, with tubes feeding into his arm, lay a centurion, free hand drumming a pursuit rhythm against his breastplate, eyes intent on me beneath the crest of his legion. Beside him lay a huge man in a horned helmet, beard wild and matted around his strapped-on oxygen mask, his great chest rising and falling alarmingly but his face still and sure.

All around the ward were men in chain mail, redcoats, bearskins, tricorn hats, all writhing or gasping or clutching their wounds, all staring at me. The nurses were gone. In the doorway where the doctor had stood was my father, in his suitcoat and plaid vest, his pants a bit baggy. He wore a stethoscope and held a clipboard under his arm. His lips were pursed, his eyeglasses low on his nose. It was the expression he used when withholding judgment.

"Not again," I murmured. I closed my eyes and tried to restrain my shudder.

"General? General. Are you all right?"

I opened my eyes. The doctor was back, and the nurses, and the other wounded men of the U.S. Seventh Army. They looked less real than the phantoms had been. They had less life in them, even the ones who weren't wounded. They were frozen like a medical-school tableau, a closed-down waxwork, waiting on me to do something to get their lives, the war, history, moving again.

I felt nearer death than any of them.

Behind me the yellow bastard sobbed. Bennett. His name was Bennett.

I muttered, "Ah, the hell with it," whirled and slapped the living shit out of him.

WILLIE TROTTING AT MY SIDE, I STRIDE INTO THE ST. JAMES SQUARE office of the Supreme Allied Commander, who stands and returns my salute, then leans across the desk, grinning, to shake my hand. So this is going to be one of those across-the-desk things. Willie's leash goes taut as he snuffles the rug, the legs of the davenport, the bar—all these SHAEF offices are tricked out like a goddamn bordello.

"George, Christ, it's good to see you."

"You too, Ike, you too."

I hear a scramble beneath the desk, and a hairy muzzle pokes out, sniffing. It sweeps from left to right like a turret gun. Then it bares its teeth and growls.

Willie stops so suddenly he nearly falls. He whimpers and shinnies backward, huddling against my boots.

"Uh-oh," Ike says. He reaches beneath the desk to seize Telek by the collar. The Scottie yaps and struggles.

"Hang on, Ike. I'll put him out." I scoop the trembling Willie into my arms—Jesus! How heavy do bull terriers get, anyway? He's harder to lift all the time—and turn to the door.

"No, don't bother, George, Willie can stay. I'll put Telek out."

"No, no, Ike. Telek outranks Willie. Besides, this is Telek's home. Protocols, eh? *Mims!* Thank you. Now, Willie, don't take on so, I won't be long, go with nice Sergeant Mims, Sergeant Mims will give you a treat. You did bring the treats, didn't you, Mims? Good man. That Mims is a good man," I say, as I close the door, leaning on the knob for support, and turn back to Ike. He is reassuring Telek, who has disappeared beneath the desk again.

"Have a seat, George." He jerks a hand in the general direction of the hideous armchair—Are all the man's gestures awkward?—and, instead of crossing to the davenport, or to the other armchair, sits at the desk and rummages papers. Fine.

"Thank you, sir." Seating myself, determined not to show my relief at sitting down, I cross my legs at the knee and fold my hands in my lap. Ike looks up and blinks his huge, bright eyes.

"Oh, come on, George, relax a little. Take your helmet off, at least. The stars are shining in my eyes. Heh."

I lift it off, set it in my lap, smooth my hair, and fold my hands atop the helmet. So tired. Good thing no one could doze off in this upholstered torture device.

"Juice? Soda water? I'm told there's real lemonade today. A convoy got through."

I glance at the ice bucket, the tumblers, the amber decanter that sparkles in the lamplight.

"No, thank you," I say, my mouth dry.

"Trip into town go all right?"

"Just fine, Ike. No complaints."

He fusses with his papers again. I need something to focus on, so I study him. If he were going to chew me out for something, he'd have started already, would hardly have let me get in the door. If he were going to go over plans, discuss Third Army's progress, update me on the war news, he'd have waved me over to the map, talked a blue streak; he loves organization, he lives for chalk talks and pointers. Hell, if he just were feeling lonely at the top again, Miss Summersby indisposed or something, he'd have sat on the sofa—or come out into the countryside to see me, not called me down to this damned fancy house.

"Do you want anything to eat, George? I could have something sent up. I can't remember what we had tonight. I think it was just bangers again—I've somehow got to get an American cook assigned here without splitting the Alliance—but hell, bangers would be better than nothing."

I haven't eaten in days. My gorge rises at the thought of chewing, swallowing. I'll avoid the question with a joke. "In America," I say, "we call them sausages, Ike."

I grin, but that was a cheap shot, and we both know it. He pulls off his spectacles—always a laborious task with Ike, who unhooks first one shank and then the other, frowns that great flat face as if his ears were coming off with them—and then looks at me without expression, tapping the spectacles on the blotter.

"I know what you call them in America, George." He winces. "What we call them. Shit."

I suppress another grin. "Sorry, Ike. Just a joke."

He tosses the spectacles onto the desk. "Goddamn it, George, I didn't bring you in here for you to give me another lecture about kissing British ass."

"I'm curious to hear why you did bring me in here, Ike."

"Maybe I just wanted to have a pleasant visit with my oldest friend in the Army. Maybe I just wanted to stay up all night shooting the shit like we used to do."

"That would be great," I say, "maybe. And maybe what else?"

He sighs, twists his mouth sideways, as if he had bangers in his teeth. "George, I'm worried about you."

This is new. "Worried," I say.

"Look at yourself, George. You barely can carry your medals around. Your uniform hangs on you like an empty tent. You walk like a colored man in a zombie movie, and your eyes are a snowman's buttons. How much sleep have you been getting lately? Christ, even a Sherman has to be serviced now and then." He glances at the bar, and I follow his glance, then look back to see him staring at me. "George, for God's sake, you haven't—"

It actually has been a good day, considering; I haven't felt any pain since lunchtime. Until now.

"Ike," I say.

He sighs again and folds his arms, leaning on his elbows. He studies the paper-strewn desktop. "All right, George, I'm sorry for asking. I know you swore it off. But goddamn it, George, I've known you for 20 years, and I can tell when something's the matter. Now, as your friend and your commanding officer—the only goddamn commanding officer you have between here and the Potomac—I've got a right to know what it is."

I shrug and flap my hands, make a show of gruff nonchalance, despite my growing unease. "Sure I'm tired, Ike, we're all tired. We'll all *be* tired until we've swept the Nazis out of Europe, and then we'll all have to go to the Pacific and be tired there, too. Hell, no one's any more tired than you are, Ike. The question is, whether my being tired is impairing my efficiency as commander of Third Army. Do you have any signals that it is?" A note of generous cooperation might be helpful here. "Because if you do, Ike," I continue, voice chirping as I suppress a cough, "I want to hear about it straight up, straight from you—as my friend *and* as my commanding officer."

The wall map behind Ike boasts a snarl of red arrows through France. None follows the straight, ancient roads that William the Conqueror used. The map in my own office is different.

IKE SHAKES HIS HEAD, FLIPS THROUGH A THICK SHEAF of reports, many of which bear my signature. A show of busyness; he hasn't put his spectacles back on. "No, George, no I don't. In fact, I hear nothing but glowing reports from Peover. All the equipment and personnel coming in on schedule, absolute secrecy at all levels, the training going well—hell, George, you could train Veronica Lake to be a tank commander if you had to, everybody knows that. No, those boys won't be green long. I presume you've got the usual bitching about the helmets and neckties, eh?" He looks back up, closes the folder, lets his fingertips rest on it, his hand crouched like a spider. "Any other problems in Peover that I should know about?"

I laugh, give him the million-dollar grin. "Well, Ike, the men at headquarters are having a bit of trouble pronouncing the name of their town. Instead of 'Peever,' they keep saying 'Pee-over,' and so now a lot of them are calling it 'Piss Over.' Maybe it'll catch on, and the Brits will have to change their maps." He's not laughing. "Other than that, no, Ike, I'm real proud of everyone in Third. No real killer instinct yet in many of them, but that will come, that will come. Walker in particular, he's doing a fine job with Twenty Corps."

"Yes, yes, it's in the reports. Glad to hear it." He reaches out for the spectacles, and my gut clenches. "But I see other reports, too, George." He hooks his spectacles back on, pulls from beneath a stack a lavender folder that's unfamiliar to me. He opens it and leafs through it, which doesn't take long, as it only contains a few sheets of paper, typed, single-spaced, and unsigned but stamped with an unfamiliar seal. "And those reports are a bit more … well, I guess perplexing is the word for what these are."

"What do you mean?" I ask. Suddenly it's stifling in here. I want to mop my forehead, but I don't dare. This is bad. This is very bad.

He scratches his head and squints. "Fortitude, George. Operation Fortitude. The fake invasion of Calais, the one we're feeding the Germans. Now, initially, George, I recall you weren't thrilled about your role in that. 'Goddamn figurehead,' those were your words, I believe."

My knees are beginning to ache again. I shift, and that lousy armchair makes farting noises. "In the heat of the moment, I may well have said something like that."

"I'm sure of the 'goddamn,' at any rate. But you seem to have become wildly enthusiastic about this fake invasion headquarters the movie studio built in East Anglia." He traces the lines of type with an index finger. "Why, in the past few weeks alone, you've been out there … 12 times. You were there on the 17th, the 20th, again on the 23rd and 24th—you stayed the night that visit, George …"

I once saw Ike sit between two chattering machine guns on a practice range while working out tactical problems with a stubby pencil. He certainly isn't going to let himself be distracted by me—but I try for heartiness anyway. "You ought to come out there with me sometime, Ike." I slap my thigh. "It's a remarkable setup, just fascinating."

"It certainly fascinates *you*, George. The 28th, the 30th … George, I know we asked you to be seen in that area occasionally, but two or three times would have sufficed." He clears his throat, rubs his jaw. "And then there's the matter of your behavior on the site."

Something is rubbing my boot. Telek. The Scottie sniffs around my feet, then sits up and cocks its ears, trying to be adorable. "My behavior," I say, thinking fast.

"Assigning rank to all the civilian workers. Requiring them to adhere to military codes of dress and deportment. Haggling over blueprints. Making demands that are, at the very least, strange. I mean, really, George. Unused roads must be kept in top repair. Unused airfields must be graded once a week. The hospital must be enlarged to accommodate expected … casualties? George, that hospital's an empty shell." He looks at me, expressionless, sucks the corner of his mouth a moment.

I reach to pat Telek, who shies away with a whimper. My hand is left groping at nothing. "It's all part of the deception, Ike. If that camp isn't convincing on the ground, it won't be convincing from the air."

"Uh-huh. Talking to yourself, George—is that another part of the deception?" Now I'm cold, but sweat is trickling into my left eye. Ike's tracing finger begins tapping the page with an increasingly staccato rhythm. "Roaming the grounds all night, muttering to yourself, or to somebody. Addressing soldiers who aren't there. Dressing them down, giving them pep talks."

Thomson. What a fool I've been. Always stepping out from behind something, surprising me. Always wanting to tag along, show me new things. Always so attentive to everything I say and do, as if she privately admired me, as if she were storing up information to share with her friends.

"I'll be goddamned," I say aloud. "A spy."

Ike sighs and says, "Oh, come on, George, Fortitude is an Intelligence operation. They're all spies, or they wouldn't be there." He sits back, laces his fingers across his stomach, what there is of it. His chair moans softly. "At any rate, this report tells me what you've been up to during your off hours. Running the real Third Army by day and the fake First U.S. Army Group by night and running yourself into the ground in the process. My question, George, is still: Why? What the hell's going on?" He waits. "Please tell me you've got something going with the Thomson woman, and she's so good that you see visions afterward."

I make a contemptuous noise in my throat. One of the first things I wrote down, that night in Mexico, was

BEATRICE

and I've done right by her this time, by God; I've made sure of that. My conscience is clear on that score.

What I say is: "That's a bit personal, Ike."

"Shit," he says, flat and commanding, as if he had said, "Fire." Another bad sign. He continues: "When one of my top officers begins

Continued on page 78

STALIN'S LADY

BY WILLIAM SHUNN
Illustration by Charles Demorat

Some miracles just happen. Others have to be helped along a bit.

WITH THE WICKER BASKET FULL OF CANDY gnawing into her massive hip, Faina stared out the window of the desecrated cathedral. It was late in the winter of 1928, nearing spring. The town, the river, the stark trees of the orchards, the frozen fields beyond, all seemed poised on the brink of some sinister transformation, like solids that had nearly reached the melting point.

Faina shifted her heavy basket to a more comfortable position, the scents of dust and wax thick around her, trying to ignore the grating sound of Comrade Mzhavanadze's voice as it drifted from the classroom across the hall. But trying to ignore the voice only led her thoughts back to Joseph Stalin, whom she had attempted to push as far from her mind as possible. She saw Stalin as he was portrayed by the Party, the grandfatherly dictator with the good-humored smile, and she saw him as he had been when she knew him 31 years before, the young would-be poet with the burning tiger's eyes and the head full of revolutionary schemes—and there was no way for her to reconcile the two pictures. Stalin the charming, the benevolent, the magnanimous, the heroic. Stalin the schemer, the liar, the coward, the murderer. Stalin, in whose service she had prostituted her soul …

No, no, *no*. Such thoughts were better not to think, because once they had been thought they became that much easier to speak. And once spoken, the speakers had a strange way of disappearing … like her poor husband Sergo …

"No," Faina said softly, swallowing her grief and bitterness, "no more of such thoughts."

"Did you say something, Faina?" asked Glikeriya, who had squeezed herself into one of the room's two wooden chairs.



HERS WAS TRULY A MEANINGLESS, VALUELESS LIFE IF A

Faina turned her head. Glikeriya's basket of candy sat on what had once been the local prelate's desk, when this beautiful stone cathedral had still belonged to the Georgian Orthodox Church. Glikeriya had just popped two gumdrops into her mouth, a strictly forbidden bit of pilfering, and she sucked at them noisily. Her cheeks were flushed bright red, her breathing was loud and ragged, sweat dripped from her forehead though the room was cool, and still she smiled like a pig wallowing in slop. Faina's nostrils flared in disgust. She hated Glikeriya Raprava, who was silly and fat and had unquestioning faith in the Party. Faina hated fat people in general, despite her own girth, but she especially hated people who sincerely believed that Great Stalin could do no wrong. "Just thinking out loud," Faina said, and turned back to the window.

"Better stop daydreaming," said Glikeriya, wheezing as she levered herself to her feet. "It's nearly time to get ready for our grand entrance."

Faina grunted something in reply and massaged the bridge of her nose with her free hand. How could the woman sound so cheerful when they were about to destroy the faith of another class full of helpless children? Faina shook her head. How? Because she was serving the Party, of course. Glikeriya was *happy* to serve, happy just to feel useful after a long and meaningless life. Anything for the Party—anything for the Motherland. Motherland. Hah! If Faina had learned anything from living through two revolutions and from her long marriage to a Party official, it was that the Bolsheviks' interests rarely lay with the best interests of the Motherland.

And great saints, she thought angrily, it isn't even our own Motherland! Georgia is a conquered nation! Why should *any* of us care about the welfare of Russia? Why should we lie to our own children for Russia's sake?

Why? Because there was no other choice. But even though she recognized that fact with her mind, increasingly her heart was having difficulty going along with it. She wondered, not for the first time, what she could do to stop this. She realized, though, that she was helpless. Absolutely helpless.

From her vantage at the window, Faina could see most all of Rustavi, laid out before her as neatly as the miniature diorama under glass in the foyer of the city hall. The Cathedral of St. Peter sat on a ridge overlooking Rustavi, and farther off, where the homes and shops gave way to orchards and vineyards, Faina could see the winding course of the river Kura, silvered like mercury by the high, pale sun overhead. The land in the distance was rugged but not forbidding. It was rich land, fruitful, full of the promises of the coming spring. If only Stalin's policies of collectivization, which seemed to Faina to slumber beneath the surface of the earth like a dormant cancer, would allow those promises to come to fruition. But she doubted they would. She feared famine in the coming years.

Glikeriya swallowed the second of her gumdrops. "Quickly, Faina," she said, waddling toward the door with her basket of candy clasped like a lover to her vast bosom. "Comrade Mzhavanadze will be leading the children in the first prayer any time now."

Despair weighed Faina down as she turned again from the window. It seemed to hang from her bones like iron shackles, doubling her already considerable mass. With her basket on her hip, she shambled after the overeager Glikeriya, feeling as if she were being led to her own execution. And it was almost true. Every time they did this, she felt a little part of herself die.

Glikeriya paused in the doorway into the hall, holding up a hand. "Not quite yet," she said, wheezing heavily. Past Glikeriya's shoulder, Faina could see the two Red Army soldiers standing like sentries near the door to the classroom. In the week they had been traveling together to all the schools around Rustavi, she had never learned their names. Mzhavanadze's voice, grating but passionate, rose and fell inside the classroom as he extolled the wisdom and foresight of Lenin's humble disciple Joseph Stalin. Faina caught brief glimpses of Mzhavanadze's waving arms as he peppered his sermon with animated gestures. That was one of the few things in the man's favor; he was nothing if not fervent in his beliefs. He had been ever since their own school days.

Faina scratched the back of her neck as they waited for their cue. She would never become accustomed to the coarsely woven peasant dress she was forced to wear on these occasions, nor to the rough scarf that covered her gray-streaked hair and tied beneath her chin. Even during her husband's days as a revolutionary, she had never had to dress in fabrics as poor as these. Finery no longer had any place in the kingdom of the Bolsheviks, or so it seemed, not even in this former house of God. The walls of the prelate's office were bare, stripped of the gold and velvet that had once adorned them. Icons, decorative paintings, and statuary had been removed from every corner of the cathedral. Above the prelate's desk, a dark, cross-shaped discoloration on the wall was all that marked the place where a crucifix had once hung. Even the cross atop the cathedral's highest spire had been torn down. God had been chased from His house as surely as the *kulaks*, the wealthy family farmers, were being chased from their farms.

The Party had always espoused a radical atheism, but in these months of collectivization the ruthlessness with which even the least religious impulse was being weeded out was frightening. The only religion permitted any longer was faith in Communism. "Why must I be a party to this?" Faina had asked, horrified, when Comrade Mzhavanadze first came to her small house to request—no, to *insist* upon—her assistance. She had never been particularly religious herself, but she had always believed in God—in an abstract if not a personal way—and the idea of tearing away at the faith of small children filled her with a sickness that bordered on pain.

"Because the Party requires it of you," said Mzhavanadze, his small black eyes narrowing beneath bushy salt-and-pepper brows. "And because it is right."

"Shame on you, Anastas!" said Faina vehemently. "What was it that brought your little Valeria to life when she was born not breathing? It was your prayers, and Domna's, and certainly not the Party! How can you even *propose* this?"

If the outburst affected Mzhavanadze, it was only in a tightening of the muscles around his mouth, a sharpening of his already-prominent cheekbones. "This is your duty, Comrade Faina! Look at yourself! You have grown fat and slovenly at the expense of the Party, which has supported you for over half your meaningless life. The time has now come for you to use that fat in the Party's service. Fat like yours is rare enough these days, and our Leader insists that it be put to use. I won't hear of you shirking your responsibility!"

Faina would readily admit to being fat—there was no point in denying it—but she had wanted to complain that Mzhavanadze, a lifelong friend who was drinking *her* black tea in *her* receiving room, had no right to abuse her hospitality by calling her slovenly. However, implicit in the tone of his request was the threat that any refusal would be met by the same kind of disappearance that had claimed her husband Sergo not many months before.

And Mzhavanadze was right; her life *had* been a meaningless imposition on the Georgian people. She had made no contribution to the Revolution; she had borne it no children. She had grown fat on its rations, despite the fact that she ate nearly as sparely as Sergo and the Mzhavanadzes. She had done no good that she could rec-

ognize, other than supporting Sergo in all his Party activities—but now that Sergo was gone, what did any of that matter?

So she had agreed, and now here she was, poised yet again to participate in an act that was worse than meaningless—one that was actively destructive, actively evil.

Over Glikeriya's shoulder, Faina saw one of the soldiers hold up a finger. This was the sign to be prepared; the first prayer would shortly begin. To demonstrate the power and benevolence of Stalin, Mzhavanadze would lead the children in a prayer to God—a petition for Him to reveal his presence and infinite love by providing candy to a class of such faithful and upright young students. When that petition failed to bear fruit, he would then lead them in a prayer to Great Stalin, Founder of Communism, Father of Peoples, Hope of the World's Poor. And Faina and Glikeriya would then sweep into the room, bright smiles creasing their round, jolly, apple-cheeked faces, bearing candy and good wishes from Father Stalin himself.

Faina's knees trembled. She had not known Stalin well, but she had met him on more than one occasion, back when he was still Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili—when he and Anastas Mzhavanadze and Sergo Kankrin were all students at the Tiflis Theological Seminary, when they were fledgling members of the Social Democratic Labor Party. She remembered him as a vengeful and brooding young man, a frustrated poet, a peasant with a crippled left arm and an anger that was always buried, always burning. She remembered him as an organizer of marches and demonstrations in Tiflis and other cities, who would leave the dangerous forward positions to be filled by other men, the blades of the Tsar's mounted soldiers to be braved by other necks, while he cowered in the rear ranks, or hid watching from nearby alleyways. She remembered him as he was before he changed his name to Stalin, "Man of Steel."

And Sergo had remembered him also. "This crazy new campaign of Stalin's will ruin the country, Faina," he had said not six months before, pacing across their tiny kitchen, hands thrust deep in the pockets of his trousers, chin nearly touching his chest, "mark my words."

"How can you say such a thing?" she had answered, despite the fact that in her heart she knew he was right. In fact, on some level she recognized that what she was really asking him was how he could even consider expressing sentiments that might cost him his life if spoken before the wrong audience. "He's our Leader. He would never guide the country down the wrong path."

The rebuke in her voice seemed to sting him, and he looked up with hard but wounded eyes. "Oh, come now," he said. A spot of color bloomed high on each of his sallow cheeks, as always happened when he voiced his most deeply held convictions. "You may not have known him as well as I did when we were all studying at Tiflis, but you surely knew him well enough to realize how false that notion is."

Faina could only stare at him, shocked by the fervor in his voice. He seemed too frail a man to contain such passion, with his pale blue eyes, and his lank hair prematurely white. For the first time Faina realized that her husband was an old man, old before his time, and that he was mortal.

"Collectivization *could* be a good thing," he went on, "but not at this foolhardy pace! The *kulaks* shouldn't be turned out overnight. There needs to be a transitional period, because the peasants we're moving onto those lands don't have *near* the skills they need to keep production at.... "

Faina scarcely heard him, though. She was already grieving the loss of her husband's youth and the loss of her own. "By heaven, Sergo," she heard herself say, her tone that of a woman bereaved, "keep words like this inside the walls of our home. Don't let anyone else hear what you're saying."

But apparently he had, because within a month and a half of that conversation he had vanished. Faina had turned 48 shortly thereafter in December, and there had been no one to celebrate with her—no husband, no children, no friends who would have dared. Of course, it was not an occasion Faina deemed worthy of celebration, but her loneliness had only made that birthday all the more painful.

Joseph Stalin had turned 48 at about the same time, and there was talk of turning his birthday into a national holiday. Faina shuddered at the thought. Hers was truly a meaningless, valueless life if an entire nation could celebrate the birthday of a monster while she couldn't dig up even one person with whom to share a quiet cup of tea.

For years she had rued the fact that she had never had a hand in creating anything good, unless she could count her marriage with Sergo. Inside her was a void that ached far more acutely than any physical hunger could—but only when she allowed herself the luxury of feeling it.

The soldier who had gestured a few moments earlier—the taller of the two, the more handsome—now held up two fingers. Not much longer to wait. Faina's throat tightened as she heard the first prayer begin, Mzhavanadze's voice grinding out the words, and all the children reverently repeating them in unison: "Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name.... "

Glikeriya put a hand over her mouth to suppress an excited giggle, and began tiptoeing into the hallway. "I love this part," she whispered conspiratorially. "All those excited faces ... "

Following Glikeriya, Faina felt her chin crumple up and her lower lip begin to tremble. She fought back her tears, determined not to show any sign of weakness in front of the soldiers.

The hallway in this east wing of the cathedral had a vaulted ceiling inset with dark, exotic woods and a row of high, narrow, east-facing windows that looked out over the roof of the prelate's office, but which from Faina's viewpoint showed only wedges of gray-white sky. Dust motes swam like renegade regrets through watery columns of light, and the faint scent of lemon oil lingered tantalizingly in the air, mixing with the odor of Glikeriya's sour sweat. The two women's shoes clicked and echoed on the polished stone floor; Faina thought to herself that she and Glikeriya were about as graceful and silent as a pair of elephants.

The handsome soldier motioned for them to stop. Fighting the tears once again, Faina looked into her basket, at the sundry gumdrops, lollipops, hard candies, and licorice whips that lay there, wrapped in waxed paper, gleaming as dully as a ransom of tarnished silver. She felt pain like the stabbing of a soldier's bayonet in that old empty place inside her. A tear skittered down her cheek and spattered on a piece of candy as Faina bowed her head and, almost reflexively, began a silent prayer of her own:

"O Holy Father," she said without sound, "if You are listening, please hear my prayer. I am Faina Istomina Kankrin, the wife of Sergo Kankrin, who has disappeared and who I like to think is now with You. I do not remember the last time I prayed, but I have never felt a need like I do today, even after Sergo failed to come home that day from the commissariat. Those are small children in that classroom, Father, and they have no defense against the lies we are teaching them. I know that they have been taught correctly in their homes, by good parents, but today we will destroy this teaching—and I do

not wish to be a part of such evil any longer. My life has had no meaning, it is true, but better that than the evil I am forced to do here in service to the Party. I beg of you, Father, please preserve the faith of these little children, these faithful and trusting children, whom I must believe are innocent in Your eyes. Amen."

The tears streamed freely down her cheeks, and Faina wiped her eyes quickly before raising her head again. In a moment, when the first prayer was finished and the petition to Stalin had begun, she and Glikeriya would creep stealthily toward the classroom door, where they could burst in triumphantly at the final amen.

"Please," Faina whispered, feeling almost suffocated as she tried to draw a breath. Somehow she knew that her prayer alone would be insufficient to protect the children from the lies of the Communist Party. Somehow she knew that God, if He truly existed, would require more of her than simple words if He were going to answer her petition.

From the classroom, following Comrade Mzhavanadze's lead, came the unison chant of 40 small voices: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit—"

Faina knew she would never have children of her own to influence. She moved almost without thinking.

The attention of the two soldiers, at least for the moment, was on the classroom. Faina stepped around Glikeriya, then broke into an ungainly run, covering the 15 feet between her and the soldiers as quickly as she could in her thick-soled shoes. "Faina, not yet!" hissed Glikeriya in alarm.

The soldiers turned just as Faina was upon them, stunned looks on their faces. With the advantage of weight and momentum, she knocked aside the handsome one with her shoulder just as he was reaching for his sidearm. As she tripped and fell across the pudgier, more homely soldier—catching an odd, falling glimpse of the startled faces of the children—she flung the contents of her basket into the classroom like a scattershot barrage.

The breath exploded out of the shorter, more homely soldier as Faina crashed to the floor on top of him, and she thought she heard his ribs cracking as her basket bounced away. But before she could roll off him, she heard the patter of the candy she had flung as it fell to the floor, onto the desks, into the laps of all the small children in the classroom, and it might have been the fall but it seemed as if the patter were stretching on and on, like the sound of hail on a tin roof, as if an unceasing rain of candy were falling into the classroom, 20 times, 50 times, a hundred times more than what she had lofted into the air …

A joyous cry sprang from 40 small throats, and as Faina, head spinning, pushed herself up to her hands and knees, a foot-deep tide of candy curled around her like a wave breaking gently against the seashore. She gasped as she saw that candy covered every square inch of the floor, every desktop. It came in all varieties imaginable: caramels of butterscotch, orange, licorice, chocolate, and peanut; foam-like divinity in every color of the rainbow; apricot balls; quivering orange and pineapple jellies; chocolates of every shape and size; chunks of peanut, pecan, cashew, almond, and coconut brittle; butter toffee; long, twisted ropes of pulled taffy; colorful marzipan shaped into miniature fruits and vegetables; plump strawberries dipped in layers of white and dark chocolate; truffles of every kind; generous cubes of chocolate fudge, mint fudge, vanilla fudge; caramel-covered apples on sticks; bananas dipped in chocolate and rolled in crushed nuts or shredded coconut; huge lollipops as big as a child's face, colored like swirling pinwheels; opera creams; fondants of every hue and flavor; and countless other varieties and variations on themes. The heavy scent of spun sugar filled the air like the mist from an enchanted forest. It was as if a confectionery rainbow had congealed and spilled into the room.

As Faina sat back on her haunches, the taller soldier burst into the room, his sidearm out and ready, but the deep drifts of candy tripped him and he fell almost on top of his companion. The pudgy soldier was trying to sit up, his eyes filled with a wonder and delight that swallowed up the pain of his cracked ribs. Glikeriya peeked timidly through the classroom door, crossing herself and murmuring, "Gracious Lord, gracious Lord, it's a miracle." Then she sank to her knees, letting her own tawdry basket of candy fall from her hands, unseen.

The gaiety of the children's laughter tugged Faina's lips into a smile, even as fresh tears cascaded down her cheeks. The children were stuffing candy into their mouths by handfuls, jumping up and down in it, scooping up armloads and hurling it into the air. Melting chocolate stained mouths and cheeks and hands and clothing, but could not hide the pure joy radiating from all those small faces.

"Thank you, Father," she whispered, her heart bursting as she watched one small solemn boy with dark eyes and a shock of unkempt hair select a chocolate-dipped strawberry and taste it carefully. He reminded her, poignantly, of a much younger Sergo. Her lungs heaved, and she was not certain at all how long she could keep from slumping to the floor. "Oh, thank you for this."

But above the delighted shouts and shrieks, Mzhavanadze's angry voice lashed out like a flail: "Who is responsible for this?" He stood like a scarecrow in the corner of the room opposite Faina, a tall, improbably gaunt man with a halo of stiff gray hair, immobilized by the sharp nails of his own anger. Beside him, in a battered chair behind a sturdy wooden desk, cringed the children's poor teacher, a thin, plain woman too young to look so old.

But Mzhavanadze did not spare the teacher so much as a glance. His dark eyes focused on Faina, and suddenly all his rage seemed to gather in a roiling knot behind his forehead. "You did this!" he cried, pointing a rigid finger at her as he strode down the aisle between two rows of desks—a hunter stalking wounded game through powdery drifts of snow. "You *did* this! You have undermined the work of the Party, spit in the face of your great Leader! I will see you broken, Faina—broken and—"

The children were falling silent all around him. Faina's heart pounded so loudly that she feared her ribs would crack. But in a quiet and firm voice she said, "Anastas, this is God's doing, not mine. You would do well to recognize that fact—since you were the one leading the prayer that brought this about."

Mzhavanadze hesitated for a moment. His mouth moved, but no sound came out. Above the chalkboard, a portrait of Stalin—with his thick mustache, arched brows, and swept-back hair—gazed down on the scene, his narrow eyes seeming to bespeak confusion and indecision more than grandfatherly patience and concern.

The children resumed their play, but more quietly, and the teacher sobbed disconsolately in her chair. "Children," said Mzhavanadze, never removing his eyes from Faina's face, "Great Stalin has seen fit today to—"

"That's a lie, Anastas," said Faina, and her spirit inside felt large enough to fill her entire body for the first time in many, many years. "I know you well enough to know that you realize this. I only wonder if you will admit this, or if you will persist in lying to these children and in deceiving yourself."

Anger and uncertainty warred on Mzhavanadze's face. For a moment she thought she could see a remnant of the man he had once been, when he and Domna and Sergo and she had been young and idealistic and so very, very happy. But then that younger man disappeared, and Mzhavanadze's features hardened into a cold, unreasoning mask. He motioned briskly to the two soldiers. "Take her," he snapped, then led the way out of the classroom. He did not look back, and he did not say another word to the children.

The taller soldier, who by now had struggled to his feet, grasped Faina by the upper arm and pulled her roughly to her feet and out the door. The pudgy soldier followed them at a laggardly pace, clutching his ribs with one hand and a bright fistful of candy with the other. Glikeriya could only weep as they left. The soft babble of children's voices gradually crescendoed, interspersed with occasional giggles and joyful shouts.

As she was escorted out of the building to the wondrous accompaniment of the noises of children at play, Faina held her head up, silently thanking God for at last seeing fit to give meaning to her life.

Outside, the world was still frigid and stark, and, as she heard the hammer click behind her ear, she prayed only that she might be allowed to join Sergo very quickly. ❧

Continued from page 41

the fairground. From there she could see for miles. Out back, among the bushes, she put feeding stations for the adverbs, and she sent for her mother and one remaining sister. The three of them lived together contentedly. The fourth daughter did not marry Russet, though she remained always grateful for his help. Instead, she became an old maid. It was a good life, she said, as long as one had money and respect.

In time, the fifth daughter came of age. (She was the youngest by far.) Her sister offered her a dowry, but she said, "I will do no less than the rest of you. Let my mother give me whatever she has left, and I will go to seek my fortune."

The mother went into her study, full of new books now, and looked around. "I have a new collection of nouns," she told the youngest daughter.

"No, for my oldest sister took those and did well with them, from all reports. I don't want to repeat someone else's adventures."

Verbs were too active, she told her mother, and adjectives too varied and subtle. "I'm a plain person who likes order and organization."

"How about adverbs?" asked the mother.

"Is there nothing else?"

"Prepositions," said the mother, and showed them to her daughter. They were dull little words, like something a smith might make from pieces of iron rod. Some were bent into angles. Others were curved into hooks. Still others were circles or helixes. Something about them touched the youngest daughter's heart.

"I'll take them," she said and put them in a bag. Then she thanked her mother, kissed her sister, and set off.

Although they were small, the prepositions were heavy and had sharp corners. The youngest daughter did not enjoy carrying them, but she was a methodical person who did what she set out to do. Tromp, tromp she went along the highway, which wound finally into a broken country, full of fissures and jagged peaks. The local geology was equally chaotic. Igneous rocks intruded into sedimentary layers. New rock lay under old rock. The youngest daughter, who loved order, had never seen such a mess. While neat, she was also rational, and she realized she could not organize an entire mountain range. "Let it be what it is," she said. "My concern is my own life and other people."

It must have been magic—the things they passed over and around became organized.

The road grew rougher and less maintained. Trails split off from it and sometimes rejoined it or ended nowhere, as the daughter discovered by trial. "This country needs engineers," she muttered peevishly. (A few adverbs had hidden among the prepositions and would pop out now and then. *Peevishly* was one.)

At length the road became nothing more than a path, zigzagging down a crumbling mountain slope. Below her in a valley was a town of shacks, though town might be the wrong word. The shacks were scattered helter-skelter over the valley bottom and up the valley sides. Nothing was seemly or organized. Pursing her lips—a trick she had learned from her mother, who did it when faced by a sentence that would not parse—the fifth daughter went down the path.

When she reached the valley floor, she saw people running to and fro.

"Madness," said the daughter. The prepositions, in their bag, made a sound of agreement like metal chimes.

In front of her, two women began to argue—over what she could not tell.

"Explain," cried the fifth daughter, while the prepositions went "bong" and "bing."

"Here in the Canton of Chaos nothing is capable of agreement," one woman said. "Is it age before beauty, or beauty before age? What came first, the chicken or the egg? Does might make right, and if so, what is left?"

"This is certainly madness," said the daughter.

"How can we disagree?" said the second woman. "We live topsy-turvy and pell-mell, with no hope of anything better." Saying this, she hit the first woman on the head with a live chicken.

"Egg!" cried the first woman.

"Left!" cried the second.

The chicken squawked, and the grammarian's last daughter opened her bag.

Out came the prepositions: *of, to, from, with, at, by, in, under, over,* and so on. When she'd put them into the bag, they had seemed like hooks or angles. Now, departing in orderly rows, they reminded her of ants. Granted, they were large ants, each one the size of a woman's hand, their bodies metallic gray, their eyes like cut and polished hematite. A pair of tongs or pincers protruded from their mouths; their thin legs, moving delicately over the ground, seemed made of iron rods or wire.

Somehow—it must have been magic—the things they passed over and around became organized. Shacks turned into tidy cottages. Winding paths became streets. The fields were square now. The trees ran in lines along the streets and roads. Terraces appeared on the mountainsides.

The mountains themselves remained as crazy as ever, strata sideways and upside down. "There is always a limit to order," said the daughter. At her feet, a handful of remaining prepositions chimed their agreement like bells.

In decorous groups, the locals came up her. "You have saved us from utter confusion. We are a republic, so we can't offer you a throne. But please become our first citizen, and if you want to marry, please accept any of us. Whatever you do, don't go away, unless you leave these ingenious little creatures that have connected us with one another."

"I will stay," said the fifth daughter, "and open a grammar school. As for marriage, let that happen as it will."

The citizens agreed by acclamation to her plan. She settled in a tidy cottage and opened a tidy school, where the canton's children learned grammar.

In time, she married four other schoolteachers. (Due to the presence of the prepositions, which remained in their valley and throughout the mountains, the local people developed a genius for creating complex social groups. Their diagrams of kinship excited the awe of neighbors, and their marriages grew more intricate with each generation.)

The land became known as Relation. In addition to genealogists and marriage brokers, it produced diplomats and merchants. These last two groups, through trade and negotiation, gradually unified the five countries of Thingnesse, Change, Subtletie, Varietie, and Relation. The empire they formed was named Cooperation. No place was more solid, more strong, more complex, more energetic, or better organized.

The flag of the new nation was an ant under a blazing yellow sun. Sometimes the creature held a tool: a pruning hook, scythe, hammer, trowel, or pen. At other times its hands (or feet) were empty. Always below it was the nation's motto: WITH.



BELOW: Craft details tha dangers of dragon dueling for tha cover of Robin McKinley's *The Hero and the Crown.*

The Art of Enchan

By Karen Haber

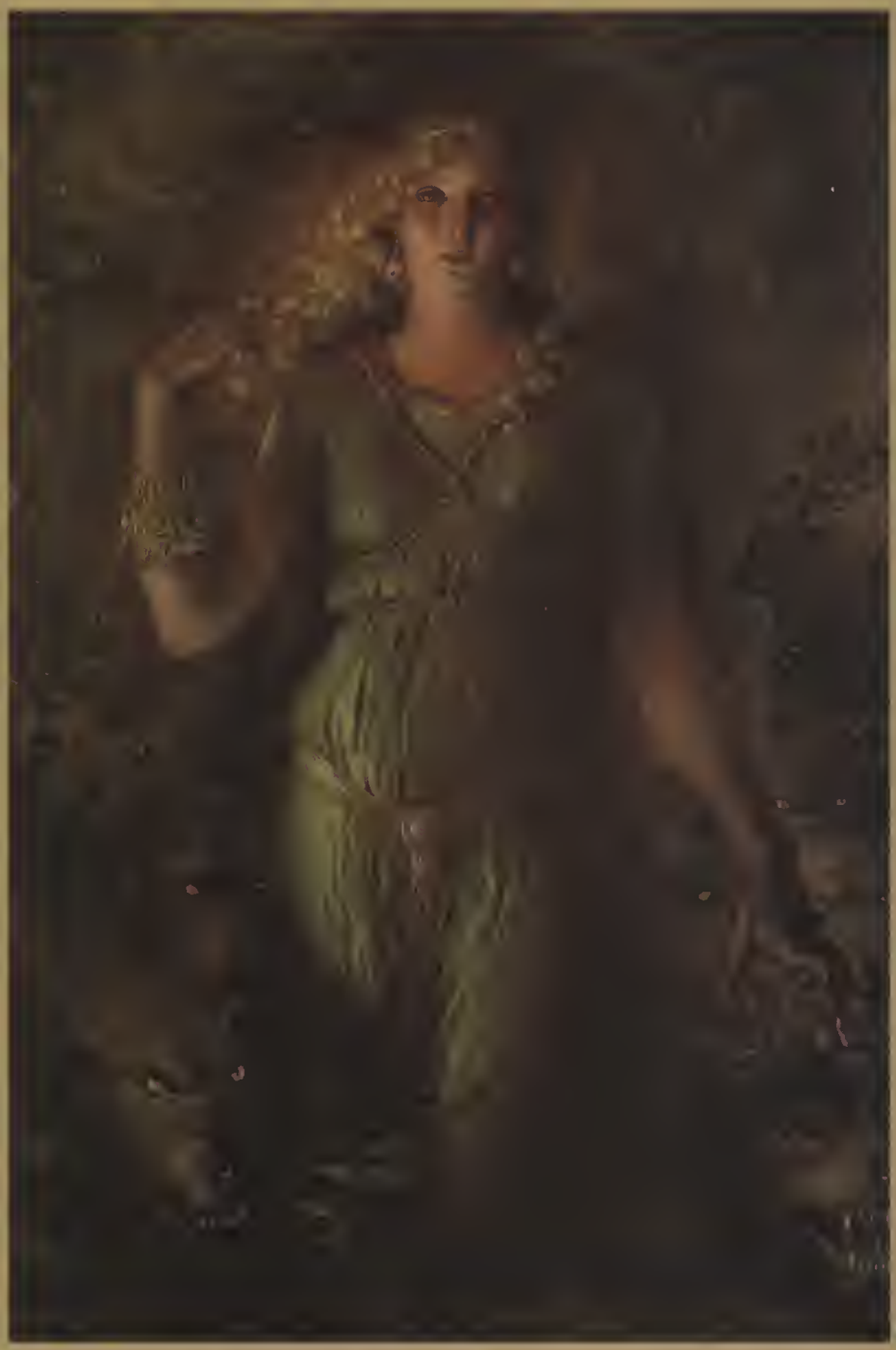


Some artists are storytellers. Others are soothsayers or magicians. And a few, like illustrator Kinuko Craft, are all of the above, plus weavers, jewelry makers or enchantresses. Threads of all these and more can be seen running through her work like warp and weft, creating with wit and detail.

Her magical [illegible] color paintings must be savored for both their large and small elements. pull up a chair [illegible] the big picture," then linger over the many [illegible] details. For example:

• Rose petals [illegible] blood drops against the snow of dark horses [illegible] round through [illegible] sky.

• A fantastic [illegible] forms the [illegible] features of a young boy's face, framed by two serpents, light and dark embracing.



ABOVE: With this cover illustration for *The Hounds of the Morrigan*, Craft shows us that beauty, and other dangers, are in the eye of the beholder.

• In a fantastic garden a winged lion sits and watches a beautiful maiden serenading herself by the light of the Moon.

"Stories have a color. a certain smell and taste," the artist says. "I have to spend time with that, inhabit it, taste it, know it. I want to bring out my fantasy about that flavor."

Craft relies on her instinctive reactions to the manuscript to separate the straw from the gold. "It must have a welcoming sensibility," she says. "The writer's sensibility must meet me halfway. There must be room for my imagination, for my heart. I can't just be a hired hand. If something is not right, if I read the story and it's like a blank, then I know I can't do it. If the story is so offensive or alien, or too much for my psyche to take, I will know long beforehand, even before I can take on the research."

Her instincts have brought her repeated recognition by professional art publications, competitions, and shows. To name but a few, Craft's work is in the permanent collection of the National Geographic Society, Time Incorporated, and the Museum of American Illustration; it appeared in a solo show at the Society of Illustrators, NY, and in a featured article in *Step-By-Step* magazine. In addition she's received many gold and silver medals from the Society of Illustrators. Her client list includes *TIME*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, *Forbes*, *Playboy*, *Sports Illustrated*, *US News & World Report*, and *Atlantic Monthly* magazines; the *New York Times*; and many major book publishers and advertising agencies. Her fantasy covers have been featured on books by C.S. Lewis, Isaac Asimov, Patricia McKillip, Andre Norton, and Tanith Lee. Her work has been licensed on products such as greeting cards, gift bags, puzzles, and needlework kits, and her original paintings are currently on display in the traveling show, "The Art of Enchantment."

"My mission is, I really feel, to tell my version of the story," Craft says, "to show my reaction to it. That's why I spend so much time on it. The more time I put in, the more something lives in the image."

Craft's range is unlimited: From high fantasy and romance to dark horror, she renders all subjects with a special intensity and dedication, drawing from her huge reference library for the resonance of ages and images past, and upon her mastery of technique. Although her work is recognizable, it's hardly predictable, varying in approach, technique, and concept. She's known for both her obsessive attention to detail and equally meticulous research of her subject matter.

Art historical references abound. Her painting for a reissue of C.S. Lewis's *Perelandra* contains fantastic creatures, some of which might have flown right off the edges of 15th-century Dutch maps and across the centuries to perch here. In an illustration from *Pegasus*, a leopard that

"Stories have a color, a certain smell and taste," the artist says. "I have to spend time with that, inhabit it, taste it, know it. I want to bring out my fantasy about that flavor.





might have prowled out of "The Peaceable Kingdom" bends its spotted head to drink from a pond while golden fairies frisk on the far shore. In another work, there's an echo of an Hieronymous Bosch nightmare, or a Giotto fresco, exquisite Indian miniatures or ancient Asian embroideries. But Craft's work transcends reverent homage to become something unique.

Says Ray Bradbury: "Kinuko Craft is a Renaissance woman ... she is an artist for all seasons, for all kinds of subjects, and in all kinds of styles. If you survey her works, you will find little duplication in form, color, or texture ... there is an air about all of her illustrations of one who is a true connoisseur of art, wide-ranging through all the countries of the world."

Her vivid personal visions are the result of intense concentration for a period of several months during which the real world becomes a thin illusion for the artist. "I actually live in the book while I work," she says. "I function much like an actor taking on a role. The outside world fades away."

ABOVE: Creft shows us a truly fantastic evening for the cover of *Song for the Basilisk* by Patricia McKillip. INSET: Winged and quiet Cupid comes to visit a sleeping Psyche.

"I don't mind receiving information directly from hair, etc., should be accurate. But once I'm engaged in my





ABOVE: Take flight on Craft's vision of mythology with this illustration in William Morrow's *Cupid and Psyche*. INSET: Tanith Lee's *The Silver Metal Lover* tunes for a ballad.

skills, shared his wide collection of reference books with his impressionable granddaughter. "Those were my childhood books," she recalls. "Art of the world. They made a big impression, more than anything else, and gave me a sense of direction.

"This is one reason that I really feel it doesn't matter what age the audience is. Those art books were building blocks for me. That's part of the reason I think that young people should be exposed to art of all kinds from early on. Rather than say, 'This is much too complicated for them,' I think you should allow them to look and interpret on their own level. Imagination is ageless. Don't categorize."

She began drawing and painting as a young child, and graduated with a BFA from the Kanazawa Municipal College of Fine and Industrial Art. In the early 'sixties, she came to the United States to finish her art education at the

She laughs. "It can be a real problem, especially when we run low on food during an ice storm, and I've just spent 12 hours in my studio. But I think I've always been in a fantasy world all my life. I think you're born a dreamer, born an artist."

Craft entered the "dreamtime" of this world in Japan, where she was captivated by art when her maternal grandfather, who was a calligrapher among many other

And I feel that the color of the process, I don't want to be

School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Immediately thereafter she found illustration work and began to paint free lance full time in 1969.

Craft says that her intense preparation is the key to her work, and she maintains an impressive reference library at her home studio in Connecticut. "I feel that I should have really good information and references to work from. Preparation is so important. By the time I face the white paper, the image is there waiting for me. Unless I prepare first and put those things in my head, I can't see the picture."

To achieve that visualization, Craft spends painstaking hours reading the manuscript, forming a mosaic image of the first hundred pages. "After page one hundred, a mood sets in and it begins to take shape. I underline anything visually impressive and then remove that page. By the time I finish reading the story I have a bunch of pages—and images—in my head."

How does she know which vision to use? "When it's right I know it. Something excites me visually, gives me something to build on. By the time I do the sketch, I know what the finished cover will look like. So, based on the finished cover in my head, I make the preparatory sketch and send it in for approval." Again she laughs. "And then the problems start."

One of those problems, she says, is author intervention. "It depends on how deeply involved they want to get. It's fine at the beginning, as part of the preparation, but not after that.

"I don't mind receiving information directly from the writer at first. And I feel that the color of the hair, etc., should be accurate. But once I'm engaged in my process, I don't want to be distracted or dictated to. I really try to understand what the writer wants to say and put in at least 30 percent of that, and then I want to put in 70 percent of my own reaction to their story."

Craft has been concentrating on illustrating children's books of late, and has just finished illustrating a book by her daughter, Marie Craft, *King Midas and the Golden Touch*, to appear from Morrow Junior Books this year. Her recent illustrations for *Pegasus* by Marianna Mayer, also from Morrow Junior Books, should not be missed. The paintings, filled with color and magic, are a delight to the eye.



"There must be something asked of me in the work," Craft says. "If there was nothing asked of me in self-expression, I would not take the job. More than half of a project is my being able to express how I feel about it."

ABOVE: The legendary winged horse Pegasus comes alive under Craft's masterful strokes for William Morrow's picture book entitled *Pegasus*.



Some call it KARMA, some call it VENGEANCE. But all call it INESCAPABLE.

Most of the girls in my class at Brownell-Jameson Prep didn't know where their sizable allowances came from, and didn't care.

Thanks to Dad, I did.

He had me scanning the *Financial Post* while my friends were flipping through *Mademoiselle*. I could read between the lines of a prospectus or annual report the way they could read between the lines of an invitation.

I turned onto the concession road, counting off landmarks. The iron bridge over the river. The line of old apple trees. The towering elm that marked the last turn before the driveway. The field where Jane had learned to ride her Welsh mare. The sweeping branches of the blue spruce that sheltered our pet cemetery where my fox terrier and Jane's white mice rested in peace, old enmities forgotten.

The guardhouse was a shock.

Our homes had security systems, but just the usual electronics, nothing near as elaborate as some of my friends' homes. But here was a guardhouse at the gate, so new it still smelled of raw wood, mounds of disturbed earth still visible under last week's snow. Through its open door I could see an array of screens; there must have been a camera every half-mile or so all along the fence. A snow-mobile stood just outside.

BY KATE RIEDEL

Illustration by David Beck



Guardhouse complete with guard.

"No need to get out," he told me. "Mrs. Smith is expecting you."

"I just wanted to take some bittersweet to Mum," I said, scrambling out of the car. At least there wasn't anything so gross as a chain-link fence replacing the old cedar rails.

I reached for a sprig of the bright orange berries covering the fence. He grabbed my wrist just in time. A second later and my hand would have come in contact with the naked wire cunningly hidden by the overgrowth.

"That's a strong current," he said, pointing out the wire before turning me back to the car. "It would have knocked you flat."

As he helped me back into my car, I noticed the shoulder holster under his open parka.

"I...uh...thanks." I drove on. I forgot to wish him Merry Christmas.

The fieldstone farmhouse, nestled in snow and pines, a bright wreath on the front door, looked just like a Christmas card. The happiness I'd been anticipating like a present on Christmas morning came running with Mum down the steps of the front porch.

Jane and Mum had accompanied Dad to Central America when he'd accepted the three-year contract with the McNab Group, while I'd stayed home to finish my MBA. I'd teased Dad about that contract; he'd always advised me against investing in minerals exploration. But this wasn't exploration. The gold was there all right; the office just lacked management. Dad would take care of that.

"Look at you!" I said, when Mum finally released me from her hug. "You're already losing your tan!" I didn't mention the dark circles under her eyes, or slight puffiness of her face that disguised the fact that she'd lost weight.

Jane pulled my suitcase from the car. She had been 11 when Dad had taken the Central American posting, still kid enough to cry over having to sell her pony. Now she was a teenager, and starting to lose the awkwardness that comes with that transition. She was going to be as pretty as Mum.

I hugged Eloise as she opened the door for us. "I was afraid you wouldn't be here."

"Glad to have the job back," she said.

"So where's Dad?" I asked, as we settled around the fireplace in the big front room, with fruitcake and shortbread and hot chocolate.

"Still debriefing with head office," Mum said.

"That's a long debriefing."

"He'll be here in time for supper tomorrow. He's bringing your grandmother with him. We'll put up the tree then. We haven't picked one out yet; you and Jane can do that now, and Jane can show you her Christmas present on the way out."

"What's his name?" I asked, "or is it her?" and Jane smiled and blushed as if I were asking about a boyfriend.

"Him. Montedor. Dorry for short."

◆

I can't really tell a good horse from a bad one, but Jane putting Dorry through his paces in the snowy paddock was a lovely sight. After Jane gave him a rubdown—she had no time for what she called the "jodhpur brats" who only rode and left the care of the horses to others—we left him to explore his new surroundings and headed through the woods to the stand of young white pines on the other side of the pasture.

Jane talked as if determined to compress three years into the time it took us to pick out a tree: about the school she'd attended with the children of other foreign businessmen and diplomatic staff; about how she couldn't let herself get attached to the horse she'd ridden there, knowing she'd have to give him up after three years; about the village where the grandmas and grandpas tended the little farms and the pretty dark-eyed children, while the men went to work in the mine and the women to work in the villas; about how her old riding coach had helped her pick out Dorry, and was going to help her train him this summer.

I gathered bittersweet, milkweed, and swallow-wort, a safe distance from the fence.

Back at the stable I waited while Jane cleaned the loosebox and refilled the manger. "Now just a handful of oats..." lifting the lid of the grain bin.

Like furry ping-pong balls, they seemed to bounce down and roll away in all directions, although there were only, I think, two or three of them.

Jane shrieked. Dorry backed against the wall in panic, and she contained herself to calm him, although her face still shone like a white mask in the dim light of the loose box.

"It's only mice," I said. "What you need is a stable cat."

"Or a fox terrier," Jane said, making a face at me.

I lifted the lid of the bin and looked. "They're gone," I said, and held out a small handful of oats to her, and she took them and gave them to Dorry.

We made snow angels on the way back to the house. "We found the *perfect* tree!" Jane called to Mum as we hung up our jackets.

The guardhouse? Oh, your father thought it would be a good idea. The press, you know," Mum said as she sat at the pine table in the kitchen that evening, sorting through the things I'd picked that afternoon.

"The press?"

"Did I say the press?" She carefully added discreet touches of gold paint to the rough grey outsides of the milkweed pods. I knew it was pointless to ask any more.

"When did Jane start being afraid of mice?" I asked instead.

"Mice?"

"In the grain bin. For heaven's sake, she used to keep white ones as pets!"

"Until your terrier killed them."

"Oh, Mum, don't remind me. He couldn't help it, it was bred into him. And I bought her a new pair."

"I'll call tomorrow about having it replaced with something mouse-proof." Mum closed the paint bottle and began to place the dried sprays, one by one, in an antique stoneware crock.

"It was only a couple of mice," I said.

Mum contemplated the placement of a sprig of swallow-wort. She has lost weight, I thought.

"We had a mouse plague, just before we came home," she said.

"A what?"

"You couldn't go anywhere without mice underfoot. They destroyed the food and any they left had to be discarded. You go to put on a shoe and there's a mouse in it. Turn down the bed, they scatter in all directions and the sheets are just foul, you can only hope that the ones in the linen closet are still clean. They gnaw through wood and even tin..."

Mum picked up a roll of red velvet ribbon and measured off a length. "They didn't bother to run away, there were so many of them." She tied a generous bow around the neck of the crock. "The only thing that kept us sane was knowing we'd be coming home at the end of the month. For the stand in the hall, do you think?" she said, sitting back and contemplating the finished arrangement.

When I came downstairs next morning, Mum and Eloise were in the kitchen, making up the grocery list. I poured myself a cup of coffee, bit into one of Eloise's raisin scones, and reached for the newspaper that lay on the table.

Mum snatched it away. "As bad as your father! You're *not* reading the market reports while you're on vacation. Cream," Mum went on, adding it to the list, "and extra eggs."

"And mousetraps," said Eloise.

"Mousetraps?"

"Saw some mouse dirt in the pantry this morning."

"Want me to drive in for the groceries?" I asked. "Jane might like to go along."

"Eloise will do it."

"She already has a lot to do."

"So do you. You have to cut that perfect Christmas tree, remember? And get down the ornaments from the attic."

A musty scent hit my nostrils as I poked my head through the trapdoor into the attic, and the light of the single bulb picked out black specks, like poppy seed, or caraway. I examined the box before handing it down to Jane; no gnawed spots or urine stains. I didn't mention the droppings to Jane.

Dad drove up just as we came out of the woods with the tree. I dropped my end of the tree and ran to him even before he called, "There's my Ann!" and came right through the snow to me in his city shoes. "I told you I'd be back in time to see you graduate with honors!" he went on as he picked up the tree.

Eloise was back from town and had lunch set out by the time Grandma had settled into her room.

"Do you know," Grandma said as she buttered a roll, "I went to put my clothes away and three mice popped out of the dresser drawer! I felt *quite* like Bishop Hatto."

Jane put down the fork she'd just picked up. Mum and Dad turned toward Grandma. "Well, I don't suppose you'd get that reference," she went on before they could speak. "My generation was the last to recite poetry, and even then Southey was a little old-fashioned. And the story probably wasn't even true. *My* grandmother told me that when she toured the Rhine, the guide told her the tower at Bingen was really *Mautturm*, a custom house. *Mausturm* was just a corruption, and the Bishop..."

Jane pushed back her chair and ran from the table.

"...all those poor people...Good heavens, what's wrong with Jane?" Grandma finished.

Dad explained while Mum went after Jane.

"Oh dear," said Grandma. "It was only *three*..."

JANE REAPPEARED TO EXERCISE DORRY AFTER LUNCH, AND DAD asked if I wanted to follow with him on cross-country skis.

He had a lot of questions about my seminars and a lot of flattering responses. I was glowing with more than exercise as we emerged from the trees into a clearing next to the fence and road. Jane had marked out a circle and was trotting Dorry around it, first in one direction, then crossing the circle in an S-curve to take him in the opposite direction.

I was about to say more when Dad put his hand on my elbow. "Just move back into the trees, Ann." Startled, I did so without asking why, while he called, "Jane! Jane, come on back!"

A white van crawled down the road. I recognized the blue logo of a TV network...*the press*?

"Jane!" Dad called again. But Jane was oblivious to anything but Dorry's movements.

The van stopped, and a man with a video camera got out and approached the fence, stumbling a little through the snowdrifts, adjusting his baseball cap with the network logo as he righted himself.

"Jane!" Dad called again, and then, to himself, "Damn them!"

The man decided the fence was a good place to balance his camera.

He didn't even yell as he was knocked backward. The yell came from the driver, who scrambled out to help him.

Dorry exploded at the unexpected noise, twisted toward the woods, stretched into a run. Jane stuck tight, flattened against his back to avoid tree limbs. After what seemed forever, she brought him to a trembling halt.

"Stay away, Dad, the skis are scaring him!" she called, and Dad humbly kept his distance while Jane dismounted and, stroking Dorry's neck and making soothing noises, led him back toward the stable.

"Couldn't they sue you for that, Dad?" I asked, my voice shaking a little, waving my hand in the direction of the fence and the retreating van.

"He was trespassing. The voltage isn't high enough to kill a man."

"But, for heaven's sake, he was probably only looking for some local color on Christmas Eve. Girl exercising her horse in the snow, it's a nice picture."

"They don't have to go after Janie."

Dad returned to the house alone, and I went to the stable where Jane was pulling a blanket over Dorry's sweat-streaked back.

"You all right?" I asked.

"Yeah. He was just startled," she said as she disappeared into the tack room with the saddle and bridle.

I reached into the grain bin for a handful of oats, then banged the lid shut as Jane came out of the tack room.

"Poor Dorry will just have to do with no grain at all until we get the new bin," she said, seeing me leaning against the bin. "Silly of me, I know, but...unless you want to give him some? Just half a handful."

I shook my head.

The smell as I had lifted the lid had been almost overpowering. What was left of the oats was so filthy with mouse droppings and urine that there wasn't a grain left fit to give a horse.

We decorated the tree after supper. The ornaments went on in the same order every year: first the blown-glass fruit and fragile glass globes we'd had since before I could remember; then the china bells, made in Occupied Japan, that had been Grandma's; the little wooden animals that Mum had bought at a crafts fair; finally, the silver angel that Dad, being tallest, always fastened at the top of the tree.

Eloise came in to tell us that the turkey was ready to go in the oven tomorrow, and there were muffins and fruit compote for breakfast. Eloise, of course, was spending Christmas Day with her own family.

"There's been mice around the flour bin," Eloise said. "I've set traps. I set one in your room too, Mrs. Kilbride," she added, nodding to Grandma.

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO TURN OUT THE LIGHT AND GO TO BED when Jane appeared at my bedroom door.

"I was wondering..." she said. "Would you mind...is it OK if I sleep with you tonight, Ann?"

"It'll be just like old times," I said, patting the bed. "Remember when we used to try to stay awake all night, waiting for Santa Claus?"

She giggled. "Did you really believe in Santa Claus?" she asked, climbing under the covers.

"Well...you did, didn't you? So I had to pretend I did."

Shortly after midnight I was awakened by Jane making the noises you make when you're trying to scream in a nightmare and can't.

"Bad dream?" I asked, rubbing her shoulders.

"It was Carmel's baby," she said after a minute. "I was dreaming about Carmel's baby. It died, and a mouse ran out of its mouth."

"It was just a nightmare," I said, and then, "Who's Carmel?"

She didn't say anything.

"Come on, Janie, tell me about it, you'll feel better."

"Carmel was one of the maids in the villa. She looked after me, took care of my clothes and brought me breakfast in the morning, things like that. She died too."

"It was only a nightmare," I repeated.

"No, she really died. During the mouse plague. Her baby really died too, but that was just before the mouse plague. Carmel had two days off for the funeral."

She was quiet for a minute or so while I continued to rub her shoulders, and then said, "Thanks, Ann. I'm awfully glad to be back home with you." She yawned, and added, "One of the German girls at school said her maid told her that souls can turn into mice when people are sleeping, and leave their bodies and run around. Maybe it wasn't a real mouse. Maybe it was her soul going home to her family."

A few minutes later I could tell by Jane's even breathing that she was asleep.

SHE WAS STILL ASLEEP WHEN I AWOKE CHRISTMAS MORNING. I dressed quietly, crept down the stairs, plugged in the Christmas tree lights, and went to the kitchen to make coffee and put the muffins to warm.

As I poured water into the coffee maker, I heard a sharp sound like a single firecracker exploding, then a thin shriek, abruptly cut off.

Eloise had set the trap next to the metal flour bin in the pantry. Thank heaven the mouse was dead. I took it from the trap, wrapped it in paper towels, put it into the garbage, reset the trap, and washed my hands.

As the coffee maker started to bubble, another trap snapped inside the cupboard.

No shriek this time. The trap was empty, but there was mouse dirt around the tin of cocoa and the sugar canister. I had just finished cleaning it up when Jane came into the kitchen, saying "Merry Christmas, Ann. What can I do to help?"

I reset the second trap while she was setting the table in the dining room. I heard her wish Mum and Dad and Grandma "Merry Christmas" as they came down the stairs.

Twice while we were eating breakfast we heard mousetraps snap, and we all jumped as if it had been gunfire, then ignored it. A third snap was followed by the shrieks of a live mouse.

"I'll get it," I said.

The shrieks came from the cupboard. The trap I'd reset banged against the shelf as the mouse struggled to free itself.

It was still alive when I pried open the trap. It fell to my hand, its fur creepily soft against my palm. It bared tiny teeth, a trickle of blood stained the fur around its mouth, and then it lay still. Its eyes glazed over.

It's dead, I thought. "It's vermin," I said aloud.

I didn't realize that Dad had come into the kitchen until he held out a newspaper, the same one Mum had snatched from me yesterday morning. I dropped the mouse onto it, and he folded the paper around it and dropped it in the garbage, on top of the other mouse.

As I washed my hands, I saw the extra muffins I'd left on a plate on the counter were gone. The crumbs that remained were littered with droppings, and more droppings were scattered across the counter.

"It's an old house," Dad said, "and out in the country, and it's been as good as empty for a long time. We should have thought of that, had the exterminators out before we came here. Especially after what we went through in the villa. I think," he went on, "that after we open our presents, we should go back to the city for Christmas dinner. I can call the exterminators from there, and Eloise can let them in."

"Tell them to do the stable too," I said.

"But what about Dorry?" Jane protested when Dad announced the change of plans.

"It's too bad, but we can send for a trailer to take him to board, until it's over," said Dad. "Now let's open our presents."

My first was from Dad. His own present lay forgotten on his lap as he watched me unwrap it.

"It's beautiful," I said, stroking the smooth brown leather of the briefcase, running my fingertips over my initials engraved on the gold plate.

I clicked the latches and opened it.

Jane and I screamed at the same time.

Mice poured out of the open briefcase. One ran through my hair before dropping to the floor and disappearing among the presents that remained under the tree. Others scrambled among the evergreen swags above the fireplace.

I sprang up, flinging the briefcase from me.

Jane's present, still surrounded by gold foil paper, had been a length of dark blue wool to be tailored into a riding jacket. Now the gold horseshoe stick-pin that Mum had fastened on the top layer lay among gnawed rags and mouse droppings, as befouled as the interior of my lovely briefcase.

Grandma didn't scream, only sat, white-faced, staring at what remained of the silk dressing gown Mum had given her, as the mice reconverged, a whirlpool of black and brown and gray fur. One ran up Grandma's skirt.

Grandma laughed. Laughed, and started to recite:

And in at the windows, and in at the door,
And through the walls by the thousands they pour;
And down from the ceiling and up through the floor,
From the right and the left, from behind and before...

"Mother!" said Mum. "Calm down!"

A mouse jumped from her knee to the floor as she stood and reached for Grandma's arm.

"From within and without, from above and below—
And all at once to the Bishop they go!"

"John," said Mum to Dad. "Take Jane and Ann, take Ann's car. I'll bring Mother in yours as soon as I get her calmed down."

We didn't stop for the jackets that appeared to move as if on their own as they hung on the hooks in the entryway. Were those bright eyes peering out of one of my boots? Thank God, the car was clean and quiet.

Too quiet; I could hear thrashing about in the stable. "I'll drive," I said, and Dad got in the back seat with Jane. I slammed the door, hoping Jane hadn't heard the frantic whinny.

"Turn left," Dad said as we approached the road.

"We have to go right to get to the highway," I said.

"We'll go into town first, stop at the police station."

"Police can't arrest mice," I said. *I hope I'm not going hysterical like Grandma...*

"The Board of Health will be closed on Christmas Day, but the police station won't, and the police will know who to call."

I had to open the gate myself; the guard was nowhere in sight. *Maybe he's taken Christmas Day off.* Through the window I could see the bank of screens still displaying various points along the fence. *Was that the TV van going slowly along the road on the opposite side of the property?* A cup of coffee had been overturned on the shelf in front of one of the monitors; a dark stain spreading out to the edge.

I got back behind the wheel and turned left.

The policeman in charge knew us from a break-in a few years back. He was very helpful, accompanying Dad into a private office from which Dad could make the necessary calls.

Jane had recovered enough to ask the receptionist for the use of another phone to call her riding coach. I accepted the cup of coffee the receptionist gave me, half-listening to Jane as I sipped at it. "Gary? I'm sorry to disturb you on Christmas Day...Could you? It's silly, I know, but..." She even managed a little laugh.

*A frantic whinny...*A newspaper lay on the table at my elbow, and I picked it up. Yesterday's paper.

I pulled out the business section anyway, and opened it to the markets page.

The word "MacNab" on the facing page caught my eye...*John Smith was not available for comment...James MacNab, president and CEO, says Smith behaved appropriately...*

So that was why Mum didn't want me to read the paper. And no wonder she looked worried; someone had got careless and Dad was going to be thrown to the wolves for it. *Behaved appropriately.* Kiss of death. I scanned the rest of the article: *The spill from the mines... Cyanide...only water supply to the village below the mine... arranged for the relocation...The engineer responsible has been disciplined...stimulated significant economic growth...No extradition despite an as-yet unconfirmed number of deaths...Greenpeace...*

It really was unfair. Greenpeace always got better press. Well, this would blow over in a year or so. *The increased security...of course. And Mum's comment about the press, and why she hadn't wanted me to go to town. And the TV van...*

The TV van was pulling up behind my car.

The receptionist spoke quietly into a phone, and an instant later Dad and the policeman came out of the office. The policeman walked beside us to the car.

The cameraman had his video camera braced on his shoulder and aimed at us as we came out the door; it would have been pointless and undignified to try to cover our faces. Dad ignored the shouted questions of the reporter, not even a "no comment" as he unlocked the door and took the driver's seat. I got into the back beside Jane.

The reporter grabbed the door before I could close it, his cap, knocked askew by the edge of the door, so close I could see a thread unraveling from the embroidery of the logo. He thrust a microphone at me and yelled in my face, "And how do you feel about your dad poisoning little kids and old people?"

"Leave my children alone," Dad said between clenched teeth. He pulled away from the curb before the reporter could let go of the door. The reporter's cap was knocked from his head. The cameraman dashed to the middle of the street for a shot of the retreating car. I finally managed to slam the door, and we turned a corner and left them behind.

Jane sat quietly on her side of the seat. She was shivering.

"It's OK, Janie," I said, putting my arm around her shoulders.

"No it's not," said Jane.

The driveway at the city house was empty. Dad opened the car door, then closed it without getting out.

"Now isn't that idiotic; I forgot my keys. Can we go to your place, Ann? We can call your mother from there."

My apartment was quiet, the quiet of a building housing mostly young people who've all gone elsewhere for Christmas. I put coffee on, left Dad in the kitchen making phone calls, and went to the living room where Jane huddled on the sofa.

"Don't worry," I said, sitting beside her. "You did everything you could. Dorry will be OK."

"She died in my room," Jane said, so softly I almost couldn't hear her.

"Who did?"

"Carmel. I woke up and she was sitting in a chair. I thought she hadn't wanted to wake me up so she'd sat down in the chair and fallen asleep. There were mice running all over the breakfast tray on the table beside her. Then I saw her eyes were open, so she couldn't be asleep, and her mouth moved like she was going to say something. But she didn't. Her mouth just kind of fell open, and a mouse ran out."

I put my arm around her, tight. *Why isn't she getting therapy for this?*

As if she read my thoughts Jane said, "I didn't tell Mum and Dad about it. They think I was already up and out of the room. I knew they'd want me to see a psychologist or something. But that's stupid. I mean, what good does it do to just talk about it?"

"You've talked about it now," I said, hugging her. "Why don't you go wash up, and then, if you don't want coffee, I think I have some hot chocolate."

As the bathroom door closed I heard Dad's voice suddenly raised in the kitchen. "They didn't do anything!"

Maybe whoever he's talking to isn't happy at being called on Christmas Day...

Jane opened the bathroom door. Her face was white.

"Leave them alone!" Dad cried, and I turned to see, through the kitchen door, a furry ping-pong ball roll across my line of sight. "Leave Ann and Janie alone!"

"Jane," I said, quietly, without much hope, but reaching for my purse and car keys anyway. "Jane, I think we should go to a hotel."

"Just leave them alone!" Dad screamed.❧



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to display every sign of confusing fantasy and reality, that's gone way beyond the personal." He rocks in his creaking chair. "Talk to me, George. I'm serious. Talk to me, or I'm liable to forget I'm your friend and remember I'm the guy in charge of seeing that Operation Overlord doesn't fall apart before we reach Paris, much less Berlin."

"Goddamn it," I say, standing up. My helmet hits the floor, rolls. Too fast; a wave of dizziness as I lean both fists on the desk. Ike sits there like a Buddha. "That's just it, Ike."

"What's it?"

"Overlord. Put me in it, Ike."

Now, for the first time, he looks tired, too. "Oh, for—"

"Monty and Bradley don't know what they're getting into, no one does, but I do, Ike, I know what needs to be done—"

He shakes his head, stares at the wall. "I don't believe this."

"—you know and I know that if the troops in Normandy get bogged down behind those hedgerows, we'll have a real risk of trench warfare on our hands. The goal shouldn't be capturing territory, it should be killing Germans." With a burst of energy that's almost painful, I bang the desk with my fists. "Sir," I add.

Ike shoves his chair back and stands, running his hands over his head as if polishing it. "No," he mutters. "No, no, no, no, no."

"Ike, I've been sending you papers, proposals. You've read them."

"Yes, George, read them and reread them and shook my head and put them in the file of old business. *Old* business, George." He thumps the wall map with the side of his fist. "In case you hadn't noticed, our invasion plan has already been decided."

"Ike—"

He keeps thumping the map, punctuating his points. Another damned chalk talk. "I mean it, George. Overlord *is* workable, it *will* succeed, and it's the *only* one all the Allies agree on—*all*, George. Now I know you're pissed off that you have to sit here in England with Third until the beaches are held, and I sympathize, but George, that's how it's going to be. After that hospital business in Sicily, you're lucky to be in charge of *anything* and crossing the Channel at *all*, and you know it." He takes a deep breath, closes his eyes, and rubs his forehead. "My God, George," he says, more quietly. He chuckles, eyes still closed, and shakes his head. "I swear. You act sometimes like one of those tent evangelists, like Aimee Semple McPherson with a pipeline to the heavens. Like you can wave your hands and call down the angels and have them whisper in your ear exactly what we all ought to do, and exactly how this war is going to turn out."

He starts to say more, but something, a thought, a realization, stops him. He opens his eyes. We stare at each other across the desk. Ike blinks, opens his mouth, closes it again.

It is small of me, I know, but I cannot restrain a surge of pride. How many years has it been since I last saw Ike afraid?

He puts one hand to his forehead. The hand trembles. "Jesus Christ," he murmurs, still looking at me.

"Now, Ike—"

"Hang on, George. Hang on a second." He turns to the bar, wrestles the top off the ice bucket, and begins flinging cubes into a tumbler.

"Ike, listen to me." I reach up to grab his shoulders, think better of it, falter. "There's something I should have told you years ago."

I have never told anyone, not even Beatrice, not even Papa—the real Papa. Not anyone.

"I've lived all this before."

Drink in hand, his back to me, Ike straightens. The ice chuckles in the glass.

"You see, I know how things are going to turn out ... or, at least, how they're likely to turn out ... and so I know, better than anyone else, Ike, how risky Overlord—"

Ike turns, tumbler to lips, and holds up one index finger for silence. Usually this means the fuse is lit. I shut up and grit my teeth. He gulps his drink, then lowers it. He keeps the finger raised.

"First of all, George," Ike says, very quietly, "I don't want to hear one more word, tonight or ever, about all this psychic reincarnation mumbo-jumbo, or I swear to God your war is over."

"Ike—"

"I mean it, George. Second. No more complaints about Overlord. Not to me, not to anyone. Hear me, George?"

I swallow, hang my head, look as contrite as possible. So tired, and so much to do. "I hear you, Ike."

"Third." He swigs his empty drink, gets a mouthful of ice, talks around it. "I want you to lay off Fortitude. It's a wonderful deception, George, but that's all it is. A deception. A fake. A Quaker cannon. Don't take it seriously. It'll make you crazy. OK? OK? George?"

May the God of war and all my ancestors and all the soldiers I have been and am, be with me now, and always.

"George. Are you listening, George?"

I look up, try to grin. "Yes, Ike. Perfectly. I've been—I've been under stress, you know." I choke out the words. "Just like Sicily. But I'll get hold of myself, sure I will." I pat his shoulder, as awkward as Ike himself. "You can count on me." I clear my throat. "Anything else?"

My destiny depends on how convincing that was. It didn't sound very convincing to me.

"Yes," Ike said. He sighs and leans against the bar, his shoulders drooping. "You can have a drink with me, and we'll talk about old times, and you can try to persuade me that this lousy job won't cost me all my friends. What'll you have?"

Swallowing my exultation, I say, in a smooth, even voice: "Lemonade will be fine, Ike. Just fine."

Much later, on the way out, down marble stairs and along carpeted corridors—what a palatial warren these Limey offices are in—Ike is in a chummy mood, arm around my shoulders, grinning up into my face like an elf. I'm not fooled. I know he'll be watching me even more closely than usual from here on, and that means Marshall and Stimson, too. How many phone calls, how many telegrams, before I'm sent home? So little time.

As we reach the lobby, we pause in front of a vast window and watch the fires. People come and go behind us in the echoing darkness, and near the front door, illuminated by the flickerings outside,

"IKE, LISTEN TO ME. THERE'S SOMETHING I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU YEARS AGO... I'VE LIVED ALL THIS BEFORE."

I see the shapes of Willie and Sergeant Mims, also watching. I long to get back in the Mercedes, to have a couple of hours' rest, just sitting down, but I stand as upright as possible. Wouldn't do to let Ike support me.

"George, do you remember Camp Meade?"

"I sure do."

"Hard to believe now that we once were so bored we'd drive through the countryside armed to the teeth and hope robbers would jump us. Do you know, George, I still wish they had."

"So do I, by God, so do I."

"At least then we'd have accomplished something in that do-nothing assignment."

"But we did, Ike. Remember? We proved that if we had to, you and I could take a tank apart and put it back together again single-handed. And I bet we're the only two Generals in this whole miserable war who can say that."

"That's right. By God, I had nearly forgotten! You and me in the garage the whole damn weekend. I never thought we'd be able to do it, George, but goddamn if you weren't right, as usual. Every last nut and bolt back in place."

"We were nothing but grease from head to toe, a couple of Jolsons."

"And when we were done you made a big show of being horrified and pulled that big old washer out of your pocket—said, 'Oh, shit, we forgot one!' For a second I believed you. Nearly wet our pants laughing."

"Nearly?"

"Almost got killed fooling with those tanks, George. You remember when that snapped cable went whipping past our heads and cut down those saplings behind us?"

"Hell, yes, I do. Scared the shit out of us, didn't it?"

"George." His voice is different. His face is grim in the firelight. He nearly whispers. "When I look at you now, George, do you know what I think of? I think of that cable. Snapping."

We stare at each other for a second or two. Then from across the lobby comes a terrible burst of snarling. Sergeant Mims and a couple of MPs are dancing in a circle, waving their hands and yelling, while at their feet is a roiling, yipping mass of fur and teeth.

"Aw, shit. Telek!" Ike yells.

"Willie!"

THE DOGS MIGHT HAVE KILLED EACH OTHER already, if it were not for the parquet floor. No traction. Willie a fighter! I can't believe it. Ike and I holler and curse and snatch at their collars but can't grab hold. WACs and staff officers come running from all the doorways and gather around and add to the din. The ruckus rebounds off the vaulted ceiling. Finally Sergeant Mims grabs a William Morris vase and empties it on the mutts, flowers and all. A good man, Sergeant Mims. Ike and I seize the chance to lunge, and soon both of us have an armload of wet, scrambling dog. A few damp daisies droop from Willie's ears like a garland. Ike has his hand clamped around Telek's muzzle, but I let Willie bark, and bark, and bark, the echoes sounding like an army of terriers pouring through the building, converging on the entryway from all directions.

"Sorry, George," Ike says, loudly. "I must have left the door ajar. No harm done, I hope."

"Harm done? Ike, I'd say this is Willie's finest hour." The pain hasn't entirely gone, but I feel energized again, rested, rejuvenated. I beam at everyone. "Did you see the little bastard go? Did you see him? I'd say he was getting the best of it, what do you all say?"

A general murmur of cautious assent, with wary glances toward the Supreme Commander, who grins and says, "I think you're right, George, Willie won this round. But maybe we can keep the fighting to a minimum from here on—right, George?" His grin doesn't extend to his eyes. I beam at him, too.

"Ike, if even my Willie can become a fighter, then who knows? Anything might happen. Anything at all." I kiss the sodden, yipping mutt on the top of his head. The bystanders applaud. Whew! What a smell. I kiss him again, hard.

I SHUFFLE AS FAST AS I CAN ALONG THE MAIN ROAD THROUGH THE camp, trying not to pass out. No lights, except a couple of feeble dim rectangles in the black bulk of the main construction shed. I left my flash in the car; no need for it. I know my way well, and soon we'll have lights enough.

As I pass the shed, I hear the erratic heartbeat of a hammer. All across the camp, tents snap and thump in the ocean breeze. Behind me, gravel grinds beneath the Mercedes as Mims rolls forward, headlights off, tailing me with gravity. Otherwise, silence.

It's tempting to think that I am the only person abroad in the camp, in the British Isles, in the world. But I know I'm not. I can't take refuge in that fantasy. My senses are too acute. I hear small murmurous movements in the shadows that I know aren't hedgehogs. I begin to smell, not sawdust and turpentine, but grease and gasoline. I know a flashlight beam would pick up, all around me, the gleam of rivets and steel. I try to hang on to the sensation, firm up the silhouettes, people the darkness. It's a queer feeling, doing all my seeing with the corners of my eyes. But it's what I've been doing for weeks now, and I'm getting good at it. Tonight, God of war willing, it pays off.

I think often about September 26, 1918, the start of the Meuse-Argonne offensive, when a hundred troops of the 138th Regiment of the 35th Division appeared 90 minutes sooner than previously, and saved my life. For years, I pondered their timely appearance. Happenstance? Just one of countless small, random differences between lives? Or was I partially responsible for those men? In my pain, in my despair, in, most of all, my knowledge of what should be, had I somehow ... summoned them?

Once I began thinking in this way, I couldn't stop. I filled notebooks. Take the unexpected sniper on that Mexican rooftop. If he had lived to croak out his story, what reason would he have given for being up there, for not riding out with the other bandits? Perhaps he wouldn't have had a reason. Maybe he just felt compelled to be there. Compelled by what, or whom?

And Thomson. Well worth thinking about, Thomson was. A real asset to Fortitude, yes. That's probably her in the shed now, burning the midnight oil. Damn glad to have her, even if she is a Limey spy. But where did Thomson come from? How did she wind up in charge out here, instead of that hapless Cockney I dealt with before?

Then there was Joe Angelo. Unlike Thomson, he was someone I knew, or thought I knew. But in Washington that bloody day he was different. The previous Joe never would have said those things. But the previous George Patton never would have said what I said, either. Was one difference the chicken, the other the egg? To what extent did I create that different Joe?

In everyone's life there are crossroads, moments of decision, however insignificant. To spot the crucial moments in his life, and act, makes a great soldier. To spot the crucial moments on a larger scale, a grand scale—that's the work of a General.

Maybe going through life a second time ... *disturbs* things. Throws up sparks. Creates turbulence. Maybe the identical set of circumstances can't be duplicated, because it would violate, say, some universal law. So my surroundings get rearranged in new patterns, new circumstances. New people. If I couldn't remember my previous life, I'd never realize I had this power. I'd be as dumb as I was the first time through. Even with my memories for comparison, I've been damnably slow on the uptake. Only here, in England, pondering my options, watching Thomson watch me, have I begun to suspect: All this time, without even realizing it, much less using it, I've graduated from merely having visions; I've been creating people out of thin air.

It's an insane idea, yes, but hell, this is war. If insanity works, a General is duty-bound to use it.

But the closer I get to that fatal car wreck in Mannheim, the harder it becomes, physically, to change things. Even an attempted change is hard; just ask that pissant Bennett. The past few weeks

have made me a sick old man. But I won't sit on this rock like a puffin for a second D-day. I won't. I'll get myself a real invasion force, or I'll die trying.

There! Wasn't that the sound of a match being struck? A rifle barrel being broken open? A letter from home being unfolded yet again? A can opener working around a hoarded snack of potted meat? A nickel being tossed into the pot? A whisper of conversation between two soldiers who can't sleep?

Whatcha thinking about?
Nothing. Home, I guess. You?
Nah. Just my girl. She's in New York.
That's home, too, I guess.
Yeah. Smoke?
Sure.

As I pass, something thrashes in the tall grass of the ditch, skips away across the road, between the tanks. I don't look to see what it is, but surely wild creatures wouldn't venture inside an active Army camp. Must be my imagination. The wind has picked up, and now I hear whispers on all sides.

Old Man
look
it's him all right
What's up?
better follow

I don't look around as I hear the footsteps behind me, first one set and then 10 and then 20 and then many more, walking nearly in unison, crunching the roadway with a quiet, harsh sound.

In the center of the camp, the main road intersects three others, and their union is a wide turnabout. Here I stop. I close my eyes and ponder what to say, as the footsteps move to surround me.

Normally, on the eve of battle, I do this in the daytime, with a battery of microphones and loudspeakers and a hillside full of troops like the Sermon on the goddamn Mount. But nothing's normal about this operation, is it?

Someone coughs, and then someone else. Enough. Time to get started, or I've lost them. If an army isn't inspired, it's nothing.

"Men," I say.

Even without amplification, my voice carries. All is silent again. As I speak, I keep my eyes shut.

"You've heard what Ike and Bradley and all the pencil pushers in London and Washington say about you. They say you're not a real army. They say you're nothing but a bunch of fakers. They say there's no fight in you. You've heard all these things, and so have I."

Utter silence. They don't know what to make of this.

"But you know, and you know, soldier, and you and you and *you* know"—eyes still closed, I "look" from one soldier to the other, a surefire technique—"just as I know, that all that talk is nothing whatsoever but *bull*-shit."

Some whistling, a couple of cheers, applause. The wind is picking up again.

I continue: "And we all know whose opinions really matter, don't we? Who we should pay attention to? Those son-of-a-bitching Germans, that's who."

I start to pace, slowly, crouching to emphasize a point and standing upright again, then wheeling to retrace my deliberate steps. Many hours I've spent at zoos, watching panthers and other hypnotic beasts.

"That's right. Those Germans are as clever and as practical as a nest of rats, and they don't waste time with fantasies. They see the truth. When they look at you, they don't see a lot of fakers. They don't see a laughing matter. They don't see a paper army. No, they look at you, and they look into your eyes and your guts and your souls, and they see who your commander is, and do you know what they do? Do you know what they're doing right now, in Bitburg and Frankfurt and Düsseldorf and Heidelberg?"

Tell us, General
What are they doing
You tell 'em, General

"I'll *tell* you what they're doing. They're knocking their knees together and pissing in their pants and jumping headfirst into rat holes and wailing, 'Goddamn it all to hell, it's that goddamn First U.S. Army Group and that son-of-a-bitch Patton again!'"

Laughs, shouts, applause, rushing upward like a bonfire freshly caught.

"They know we're going to come over there and kick their asses west to east for a thousand miles and hunt them down and kill every last one of them, from the first beachfront machine-gunner in France to the goddamn Fuhrer himself, hiding beneath the seat of the last upright shithouse in Berlin.'"

Now they're really whooping it up.

Hot damn
He can put it down there, can't he
Tell us, General, tell us

Time to quiet them down again, sober them up. I start sneaking glances at the dark and shifting shapes all around, at cigarettes glowing bright and then dimming like fireflies, at tank guns outlined by the stars.

"I know what you men are thinking. You're wondering whether you have what it takes in battle. You're wondering whether you're going to honor yourself, or disgrace yourself. Honor your country, or disgrace your country."

Mostly silent now. I can hear the faint caress of the surf.

"Well, men, I know what's going to happen to each of you, and I'll tell you in advance so that you won't have to worry anymore. Each of you is going to fight, and fight, and fight, until there's no more fighting to be done."

Hell yeah!
We'll fight, sure we will
Bring 'em on

"Because you are Americans. All Americans love to fight, and you men are no different."

Goddamn, I'm out of practice. My throat's like beef. I raise my voice to be heard over the rising tide of approval.

"It is your *duty* to fight, it is your *nature* to fight, it is your *divine destiny* to fight, and it is your *pleasure* to fight, and kill, and keep fighting and killing until every last Nazi in Europe is dead. And then it's the goddamn Nazi army that will be a figment of the imagination, and not you, because you will have proved yourself real with your sweat and your blood and your guts."

Now I detect smells, too—shoe polish and hair tonic and C rations and Lucky Strikes and chewing gum and axle grease and old boots and freshly laundered fatigues and the pungent sweetness of gasoline and tank exhaust. I gulp the air.

"The job ahead of you, men, is the biggest job ever undertaken by an American army, the biggest job ever undertaken by any army in any war. And you are ready for it. You may not think you are ready, but I am your commanding officer, and I am here to tell you that you are. I have absolute confidence in each and every one of you to do his job and keep on doing it no matter what."

Now I'm bellowing to be heard. My knees are weak. God, how I have needed this. I step backward a few paces, grope behind for something to lean on.

"Hell, I might even feel sorry for those poor sons of bitches we're about to kill, but they brought it on themselves. Those Nazis started all this goddamn son-of-a-bitchery, and by God, you and I as Americans *are going to finish it*."

Pandemonium. I feel the crowd surging around me, hot and close, but I still can't distinguish faces, individuals, even though my eyes are wide open. I back into something smooth and massive: a tank. I lean against it, grateful, run my hands along its flank, prick my finger on something, take a last deep breath, and raise my hands for order.

Listen up, you bastards
Listen to the General
Ten-SHUN

The racket fades into a murmur, and as I open my mouth for a final push, I focus on my smarting finger and realize—

A splinter? From a Sherman tank?

Oh, Jesus, no. Jesus God.

I close my eyes, reach behind me again. The crowd around me, so close, so stifling, so … familiar. And now I smell burning pyres, the reek of longboats, blood on armor, and a thousand Shenandoah campfires.

Goddamn it, I smell the *past*. But I don't want the *past*. I don't want it! I want—

Before I can yank my hand away in fear, my fingers brush steel: cold, riveted. I lift my fingers to my nose, smell metal and oil.

I whisper, "Another chance, Papa," and I crumple to the ground. First to my knees, then sideways, no strength left to catch myself. A general gasp around me.

You OK, General?
Still with us?
He's a good one, ain't he?
He's gonna let us have it, you watch
Look at him
Here he goes

Spitting dirt, I roll over and try to lift my head. I can't see a damn thing, just spots before my eyes.

I'd like to be there when Ike gets the news. But maybe it won't be news to him anymore, this unexpected reinforcement, this change in plans, this change in destiny. Maybe, like these men, he knows the voice of command, and forgets everything that came before. Because he, like these men, is a soldier.

Somehow I manage to shout: "Men!" Then a coughing spasm hits me, and then, with my last reserves of air, I continue:

"I tell you the truth tonight when I say that you are the best army, the most dedicated army, the most American army, that I have ever had the privilege of commanding. You, my friends, are that thing so rarely seen on the face of this sorry earth—a real army! And you will continue to make me proud, and win victories, and kick German ass, until this war is over. Remember. The shortest route home is through Berlin! So follow me, men! Let's piss in the Rhine, and then go home!"



TREMENDOUS CHEER PINS ME TO THE GROUND, gasping, and then I hear a series of *whunts* as the floodlights go on, and I feel the light hot on my skin like a new sun. I hear a gunning of engines, a storm of voices, a rush of cracks and snaps like wildfire, as thousands of men lift their rifles, shoulder their packs, secure their gear. Above me I see only blackness, but I hear everything. Sergeants bark orders. Convoys of vehicles snort and spit exhaust as they grind past—jeeps and supply trucks and ambulances. Platoons trot alongside. Their packs rustle in unison, and the running men huff as one, like a steam engine. A deafening roar overhead: must be a bomber, low but climbing; a second one, a third. Ours. And the tanks! Nothing else like that clanking rattling trundling growl, that single-file column churning the earth in a huge turtle furrow leading straight to the sea. By God, I wish I could see it. I want to whoop, to dance, to find Willie and kiss him again, but I can't even lift my head. It lolls in the damp grass. The blades prickle my cheek. I would turn over if I could. "Mims," I whisper. Why haven't any of these goddamned nincompoops picked me up, set me upright? They wouldn't dare leave without their General, start the battle without me—would they? "Mims!"

Amid the racket—now melding, tanks and trucks and guns and men, into a single featureless roar—I hear people bustle about me. Strong hands roll me over, and brisk fingers brush the grass and dirt from my face, fingers sharp and stiff as a whisk broom. Someone pants hot, rancid breath into my face, then licks my cheek. I immediately feel better. My voice sounds unnatural, raspy, as I say: "Hi, there, Willie, did you miss me? That's the boy. That's the boy."

A Yankee murmur in the background. Mims, conversing with someone.

I continue: "Now *this*, Mims, *this* looks like a goddamn *army*, wouldn't you say?"

Willie whines and rips the grass, digging in, as someone pulls him away. Thomson's voice: "Come away from there, Willie. Come here, you cur. General? General!"

I wish I could salute. "Colonel Thomson," I say.

"Bugger that," she says.

"Now, Thomson—"

"What the devil is going on here, General?" She's close to my ear, perhaps kneeling on the ground. "I demand an explanation, do you hear me? And what *is* wrong with you, Willie? Come here, then. Don't kiss me! Oh, appalling. What do you feed him, General, damned souls and fish heads?"

The longer I lie there, surrounded by the rumble of an army on the move, listening to Thomson's small struggle in the middle of a war, the more elated I feel. Can't change everything. Just ask Hitler. So, Fortitude has changed, but Thomson is still Thomson. Must be a reason for that. Must be. Interesting to find out what the hell it is.

Thomson, on the other hand, is getting madder and madder. "Oh, grin, grin, grin away, then. You Yanks are quite the grinners, aren't you? Your bloody President is positively sharklike. No, Willie, no, you can't get down, Mims will be back in a minute with a treat. Stay still, you bastard. You needn't look so amused, General, I intend to have my answers."

I no longer can distinguish the sounds of the army. Everything that isn't Thomson is just a single glorious background noise, like a violent shore, and steadily louder. "You'll have your answers," I say. "But it'll have to be en route, Colonel. I have an urgent appointment to keep. Mims!"

Thomson, who's in better voice, begins calling as well. "Damn it all. Mims! *Mims!*"

As she calls, I hear the thunder. Willie whines anew. I hear Thomson scramble to her feet, and Willie, apparently in her arms, begins to yelp in earnest. Calling Mims, Thomson fades, as if moving away, and the thunder gets louder, like a new radio show fading in and taking the place of another. This battle's begun. I squint toward the east, trying to find the first faint glimmers of the sunrise, but even the airfield looks dark to me. I picture the first wave of naval artillery hitting the ancient waterfront of Calais, 21 miles across the Channel. I picture the medieval watchtower slumping into the water, the bricks of the old city raining onto the cobblestones, Rodin's statue of the unhappy burghers being pounded into slag. At the end of the great siege of Calais six hundred years before, King Edward ordered me to put those burghers to the sword, then at the last minute changed his mind, told me to sheathe—

But that is in my past. Ahead of me, for the first time in many years, is my future.

"Mims!" I shout as the concussions grow louder, mimic my heartbeat. "Willie! Thomson!"

They can't hear me. Too much racket, of course. Listen to that army! By God, we've turned this sorry-ass assignment around, haven't we, Thomson? We won't be sitting out *this* invasion, no ma'am! Follow me, men! They know who their leader is. The guns are layered in cotton, pound, pound, pound. Murdering border bandits. Damn Gila monsters. I salute the jeering galleries overhead. A rotten pear bursts against my helmet. I've done my duty, you hear me, you bastards? How many of you can say the same? You don't see me getting shot, do you? The bandit looks up from the hood and grins. Look at the yellow son of a bitch, look at the crying baby. You're going to make something of yourself this time, Georgie, yes you are. Fair deal, Joe, fair deal. I can't be still, Ike, for God's sake, don't you see? You think I can be immobilized so easily? Suspended in wires with a hose in my ass and pins in my neck and a spreading brown spot on the ceiling for entertainment? I won't do it again, Ike, I won't. This is where I belong, right here, at the head of an army. That's all I want, all I've ever wanted, and I've got it. I've done it. I've won. As long as one tank is able to move it must go forward. I won't just lie here, I won't. Follow me, men. Come on! There's nothing left for you here, nothing, I tell you, but death in a ditch, and there's no one else to lead you. No one but Georgie. Follow me, men. We're out of the trenches, and moving forward. Follow me. ❧

BY ERIC BAKER

Vampires, thieves, and Cthulu deliver thrills aplenty for the fantasy fanatic.

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN BLACK ISLE STUDIOS, A DIVISION OF INTERPLAY, AND BioWare Corp got together to create a computer role-playing game based on TSR's paper-and-dice role-playing game, *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons*? Magic, that's what. *Baldur's Gate* (produced by Chris Parker, written by Lukas Kristjanson, lead designer James Ohlen, developed by BioWare Corp, published by Black Isle Studios, Irvine, CA for Win95, 1999, $49.95) has a lot to offer and will appeal to many people for different reasons. Fantasy fiction readers will love the living, breathing fantasy world where Baldur's *Gate* is set in. Fans of the paper and dice version of *AD&D* will enjoy the computer adaptation. This game raises the standard by which computer gamers will judge future role-playing games.



ABOVE: As Garret, in Thief: The Dark Project, *you'd be wise to move slow and stay in the shadows. RIGHT: Journey to* Baldur's Gate, *but watch out! Your reputation may precede you.*

This is a very big game; *Baldur's Gate* comes on five CDs. If you take your time and do the subquests, you will get over a hundred hours of enjoyment from the game. The first four of the seven chapters take place outside the city of Baldur's Gate. Chapter 5 is getting into the city, and the last two wrap up the plot. Most of the subplots take place outside the city.

The landscape and interior locations in the game are presented in a 2-D isometric view, similar to watching football or basketball on television; thus, although the background is not a 3-D picture, the overall look is fantastic. With more than 50 different locations in *Baldur's Gate*, there is a lot of scenery to admire. When you first reach a location, the map is blacked out. Moving around reveals the terrain. When your character reaches the edge of a location, the world map is displayed and it shows the locations you have already visited as icons. At this point, your characters can move across the world map with one click instead of having to tediously traverse each location. This warping from place to place may be interrupted by random encounters, which take your characters to mini-locations to kill more monsters.

Baldur's Gate lives and breathes atmosphere like no other CRPG I have ever seen. The background graphics that depict the forests, mountains, and buildings you explore are outstanding. The music and background sounds complement the visuals so well that you take them for granted. Birds sing in the forest, but only during the day. At night, you hear crickets chirping. You hear the footfalls of the characters you control as they walk from place to place. The music changes to fit the mode, but never breaks your concentration. There is enough variety in the look and speech of the people you meet that you don't feel like you are adventuring in the land of the clones.

It is the people that really bring this game to life. You will run into them all over the place, not just in the towns. You can meet a boy in the forest looking for his lost dog. Farmers are out in the fields during the day and in their homes at night. Shops close for the night and guards wander the main roads to help keep the



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peace. You can talk to everyone and most of them have something useful to say. You can pick up clues and rumors, or they may ask you to help them. You will spend most of your time helping people. The only quest you have to complete is the main one. You can pick and choose from the subquests, but they are the best way to improve your adventuring characters.

You start the game by creating your character. For the most part the game is faithful to the *AD&D* rules, for which the instruction manual includes a thorough explanation for those who have never played the paper-and-dice version. Take the time to look over the manual; it covers everything you need to know. Kudos to Interplay for not leaving out key information so they could make more money publishing a strategy guide. The starting location, Candlekeep, serves as a tutorial. People you meet in the keep will point out key parts of the interface, but this does not cover every aspect of game play. You can explore the keep while you learn the interface. By the time you leave Candlekeep, you will have interacted with computer-controlled characters, engaged in combat, and learned how to purchase items and control your inventory.

Once outside Candlekeep, you get your first clue involving the main quest. In no time at all you will meet people who introduce you to new quests. Some of the people you meet will offer to join your party. Each one has strengths and weaknesses that must be evaluated. Your party can have up to six characters. You should try to keep a balance of classes in your party; a party of six wizards is not going to last very long. You have to decide which characters to keep in your party and which have outlived their usefulness.

The control interface for *Baldur's Gate* is easy to learn and use. You can control one character at a time or control groups of characters. The game is played in real time, but you can pause the action at any time to issue

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commands, such as for combat. You can assign a script to each character you control that tells them what weapon to use and when to cast spells. *Baldur's Gate* is a near-perfect blend of real-time and turn-based combat.

Another element that shines in this game is reputation and alignment. If you go into a house and try to take something while someone is in the room, they will call for the guards. Two seconds latter, the guards show up to take you to jail. If you kill the guards, your reputation value will go down. You start with a reputation based on your alignment. Your reputation and "charisma" will influence how people react to you. If you have a low charisma and a low reputation, everyone will charge you more money for goods and services. If your reputation gets too low, a bounty will be put on your head. Every time you go into town bounty hunters and guards will attack you.

Baldur's Gate is a computer role-playing game that has interaction and role-playing, with top-notch graphics and interface. The only reason I would not recommend this game would be if you have a wife, a kid, and a full-time job ... like me. "Sorry, honey, I will be right there as soon as I kill the ogre in the next room."

Vampire: The Masquerade. Created by Mark Rein-Hagen, third edition developer Robert Hatch, editor Cynthia Summers. White Wolf Publishing Inc., Clarkston, GA, 1999, 312 pgs., $29.95

It may tell you everything that you need to know about the third edition of White Wolf's *Vampire: the Masquerade* that no one bothers to define a "turn" until page 190. *VTM* is a game about playing vampires in White Wolf's gothic "World of Darkness" setting. It is not about trying to accurately recreate the physics of the modern-day world in which we actually live. Thus, the rule book devotes almost two hundred pages to the care, feeding, creating, destroying, politics, history, rivalries, enemies, hopes, dreams, religions, courts, homes, pastimes, powers, abilities, psychology, and weaknesses of vampires before it ever gets around to the basics of how to resolve an attempt by a player character vampire to open the throat of an NPC human. For White Wolf, the story is the thing, not the rolling of the dice.

If you have never ventured into the "World of Darkness" before, then *VTM* is a good place to start, as it is the grand daddy of all the White Wolf games and systems. This third edition has both a table of contents and an index, but if this is your first exposure to the mythos, then get two paper clips and mark pages 59 and 196. The latter is the list of the game terms used in the actual rules sections, and the former is the lexicon of terms used by the inhabitants of the "WoD" and by the designers who write rules for playing them. For instance, vampires are the Kindred, humans are the kine, changing a kine into a Kindred is giving them The Embrace, while

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simply feeding from them is The Kiss. The Masquerade is the Kindred conspiracy to hide their presence among the kine. Remember the old Steve Martin joke that it is as if the French have a different word for everything? At times it seems like *VTM* does too.

Every game has a learning curve, and once you get a handle on the lingo, *VTM*'s is helped by the fact that everyone knows something about vampires. Getting the hang of the "WoD" is pretty much learning how the Kindred differ from the vampires you're used to, and learning their politics. Again the story is the thing and stories come from conflict, and nothing produces conflict like familial relationships and codes of conduct. All the vampires in *VTM* are members of one of the 13 clans, subject to that group's aid, rules, friends, and enemies, unless they are clanless vampires, in which case they don't owe anyone anything, but then they don't have any sort of support structure either. The clans are divided between two major sects and four minor ones, so every action by a vampire sends out waves of consequences that ripple up and down all these lines of association.

How is it to actually play? Less complex than it looks at first blush. All the statistics (and there are a lot of them) are on the character sheets, and the mechanics are simple enough. Basically it is *Shadowrun* with 10-sided dice and without the open-ended rolling. You have no hope of memorizing all the vampire powers and skills (sorry, I mean "advantages" and "abilities"), but it is simple enough to have the characters know theirs and to learn the ones the NPCs will be using. From there you simply pick your favorite "classic vampire plot" (suggestions start on page 254) and go. There is no "first adventure" in the rule book, but there are plenty of details for creating your own.

One combination of mechanics and attributes that struck me among the many the game employs was the use of archetypes to restore lost willpower. In *VTM*, archetypes are used to describe the face a character shows the world (their demeanor) and the character's true self (their nature). These archetypes consist of things like autocrat, conformist, perfectionist, and—my favorite—curmudgeon. Whenever the players act in a way that particularly satisfies their nature, they get a point (or more) of willpower back. Thus, if a character who is a curmudgeon by natures predicts that someone is going to do something stupid that will fail horribly, and they then do it and fail, the curmudgeon gets a point of willpower. This is a good mechanic to encourage people to play the characters as they have actually envisioned them.

Vampire: The Masquerade is a good game for anyone who is tired of playing first-level characters in a far-away fantasyland. The "World of Darkness" is close enough to the real world to be familiar, but playing in it, you get to take on the role of a powerful, dangerous creature of the night. The price is your character's humanity, but the rewards are anything you



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have the will and connections to grab. It is a commitment to learn the background, but once you are in, the support goes on and on.

Thief: the Dark Project. *Project leader Greg LoPiccolo, lead programmer Tom Leonard, screenplay Terri Brosius. Developed by Looking Glass Studios, Published by Eidos Interactive, San Francisco, CA for Win95, 1998, $44.99.*

Thief: the Dark Project, is a first-person shooter, but there is no shotgun in it. In fact, if you find yourself in combat, you might as well hit the quick-load key and try that part of the dungeon again because *TtDP* is that rare breed of shooter where the main character is not a death commando. In fact, Garret, the point-of-view character, is a thief and he is not out to save the world; he just wants to steal his fair share of it.

Garret comes armed with a sword and a bow, and the tutorial shows you how to use both, but the fact is that almost every NPC in the world of *TtDP* is a better fighter than Garret. Spiders will jump on top of you and eat your face. Zombies will absorb your blows and then tear you apart. Prison guards will pound you into mush. The truth is you might as well leave your sword home, and you bow is better for putting out torches and covering noisy floors with moss than it is for actually killing anyone. Every now and then, you'll put an arrow in a guard from cover, or you'll sneak up behind a cop and lay him out with your sap, but these moments are rare.

The heart of *TtDP* is the visibility gem at the bottom center of the screen. The brighter it is, the easier you are to see. The goal is to stay in the shadows so that the gem is always black and, failing that, only move through the light when there is no one to see. And you want to move slowly, on the carpets or the moss if you can, because the guards aren't just looking for you, they are listening as well. It doesn't matter if the gem is pure black if you are trying to run across noisy cobbles. Someone with a sword will come to find you. Luckily, sound works both ways. Just as the guards can hear you, you can hear them. More than once, a bored guard's whistling will warn you away from danger.

Not just enjoyable as a change of pace, *TtDP* is good game in its own right. There is a plot that grows and changes with each level so that the reason you think you are breaking into a mansion or prison often turns out to lead to something very different. You have to climb and jump and search, but you have to avoid the bad guys while you're at it. You don't have a pair of magnums to shoot down the guards if they see you, but you have your wits and your ears and a bag of tricks to get you to that big pile of treasure waiting at game's end.

The Golden Dawn. *By Scott Aniolowski, Garrie Hall, Steve Hatherley, Alan Smithee, John T. Snyder, and John Tynes. Pagan Publishing, Seattle, WA 1999, 192 pgs., $19.95.*

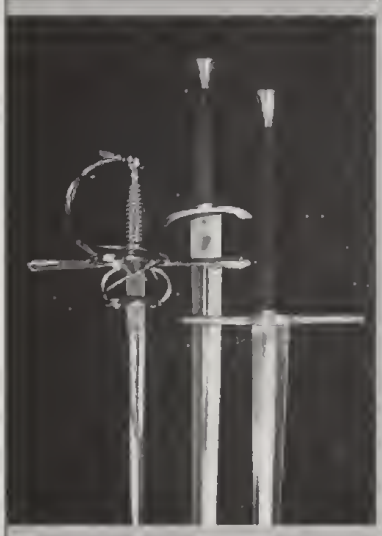
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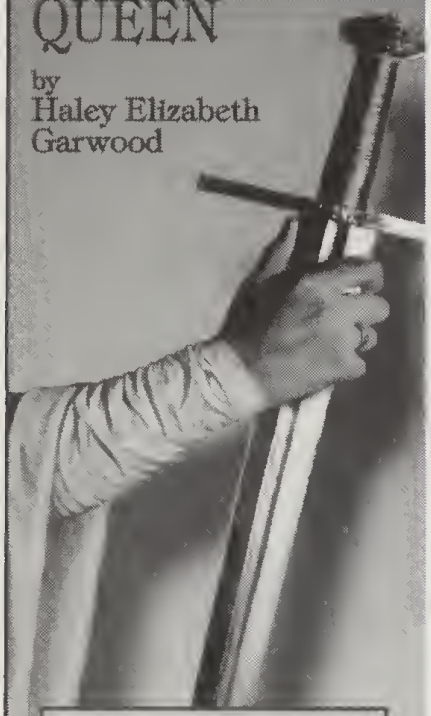
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PAINTED OCEAN

Continued from page 45

Shivering, I open my eyes and am alone in the Grand Salon. I do not remember leaving the infirmary. It is very quiet. For the first time in days, there is no music. The gilt-framed watercolor still hangs on the wall, *but the ship is missing* from its center. A dead, gray-silver sea and a horizon are all that's left, all there is in the entire world.

I wander from deck to deck; no stewards, no passengers, no officers, not a soul anywhere. All vanished, perhaps borne away upon the watercolor clipper.

The bridge stands empty, entirely deserted.

Down at the infirmary I search for, but cannot find, my nurse. The patients have disappeared.

Even the matron, gone.

Only Miss Hargrove remains.

I sit at her bedside, her small white hand in mine. Damp gold ringlets, tangled wildly like grapevines, frame her delicate, heart-shaped face. Jade-green eyes, filled with a shimmering, faraway intelligence, stare absently at some mirage that only she can behold.

"Miss Hargrove, what do you see?"

"Why, doctor, don't you know?"

"No, Alice, I don't. Please tell me."

Laughter, untamed and coltlike, ended with a sob. "Me," she whispers, "I see me."

And an odd sensation overtakes me. As if standing between two mirrors, between Alice Hargrove and the mirror of the sea, I feel myself dwindling, repeated to infinity, a man made of glass, dropped suddenly to the floor. Shattered to slivers.

Annihilated.

Other. Alien.

Myself, yet not myself—

The ship lurches, and I nearly lose my footing. My microscope crashes to the deck; a box of glass slides tinkles like wind chimes and shatters into powder beside it.

Shattered, a man made of glass.

And sound, the sound, everywhere, a thrumming louder than a hundred booming cannons. My left ear drips blood down my blue jacket.

Alice Hargrove closes terrified eyes and smiles a tight, small smile.

Through the porthole, a wall of red, a tidal wave higher than the spires of St. Pauls, bears down upon the *Journey's End*. It will reach us any moment.

Miss Hargrove! Is this what we saw in our dreams, the dreams that drove us mad?

We see the face of our father before us. Our throat clots with fear—

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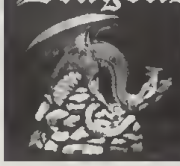
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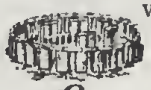
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GAMES

Continued from page 87

supplements for Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* role-playing game is that they leave nothing out. *The Golden Dawn*, a source book for *CoC* role-playing in Victorian London and Paris, contains background on the historical secret society, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, with character write-ups and stats for all the major members, including W.B. Yeats and Aleister Crowley. It also has a map of London, calendars for the years 1893 to 1900 (with the new and full moons marked), two adventures and one mini-campaign, and a 25-page section containing a sanitized version of the Golden Dawn history, rituals, and spells so that the Game Master doesn't have to lecture to the players on the first night.

Besides the completeness of the *GD* supplement, you also have to applaud the various authors for knowing what to leave out. There are books describing the Golden Dawn's rituals that run to hundreds of pages. The authors of the supplement didn't try to reprint those descriptions. You just need to know why the characters are there, and what the results will be.

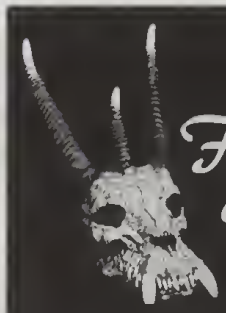


ABOVE: Step into Victorian-era London or Paris with Pagan Publishing's The Golden Dawn.

The scenarios are just as complete as the background. They each contain all the back story and character write-ups that you need, not just to make the characters hit their marks but also to improvise when the players throw you some loop that the scenario writers didn't foresee. The only complaint to be leveled at the scenarios is that they are a little light on maps, but maps are provided for all the places where combat is supposed to occur.

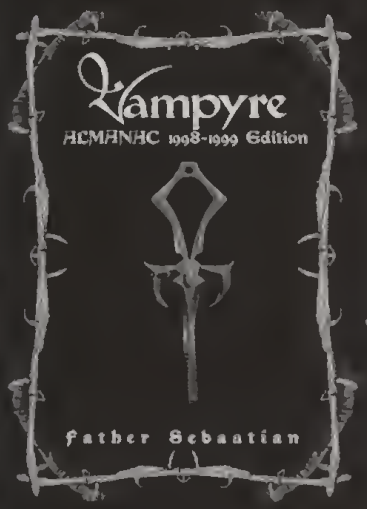
If you have an on-going campaign or are interested in starting a campaign in the Victorian era that admits magic and the occult, then *GD* is a terrific supplement to pick up. The Order of the Golden Dawn serves as a terrific framing device to give the players the allies and enemies and resources that they are going to need, and the scenarios provide you with four excellent adventures with which to explore the mythos. Like all Pagan products, *GD* is well worth the money. ❧

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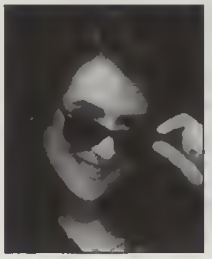
Contributors

DAVID BECK has produced numerous artworks for *Realms of Fantasy* and *Science Fiction Age*. He has worked for *Universal Picture Theme Parks* and on *Dragonheart* through *Hasbro, inc.* He has also worked on projects for *U.S. News and World Report, Boy Scouts of America, NFL Properties* and *Warner Bros. Pictures*. He has won awards at the annual exhibition of the *Society of Illustrators* and *Step-by-Step Graphics* magazine. The Grateful Dead own thirteen or more of his pieces.

ANDY DUNCAN was a finalist for the 1998 *Campbell Award for Best New Writer*, and the first story he sold, "Beluthahatchie"—which he wrote at Clarion West in 1994—was a Hugo Nominee the same year. His stories have appeared in *Asimov's, Gothic Net, The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror Volume 9*, and the award-winning *Starlight 1*, among other places. Upcoming stories will appear in *Asimov's* and *Weird Tales*. A native of Batesburg, SC, and a longtime reporter and editor in North Carolina, he now lives in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where he teaches composition, American literature, and creative writing at the University of Alabama. Andy is working on his M.F.A. in fiction. He is also, not coincidentally, working on a novel.

STEVEN ADLER grew up in Peekskill, NY. He attended the Rhode Island School of Design, studied independently in Rome, and has been a professional illustrator since 1984. Recent projects include fantasy covers for *AvoNova* and *Viking Books*, a Celestial Seasonings tea box, and a new illustrated logo for the Barbados Tourism Authority. Steve has been exhibiting his paintings in galleries in northern Virginia near his home in Sperryville.

ERIC BAKER was born in Reno, NV but has lived in Fairfax, VA since 1970. He is an '89 graduate of Clarion. His work has appeared in *Amazing, F & SF, Asimov's*, and *Science Fiction Age*. Eric's first novel is from Penguin/ROC and is entitled *Checkmate*. For the past year, Eric has been the full-time



Denise Lee



Steven Adler

game reviewer for *Science Fiction Age*. He has written two modules for BTRC's *Timelords* game system, one of which, "Supertanker Death," is still in print.

WILLIAM SHUNN has a degree in computer science from the University of Utah, and he currently works in the online division of the Children's Television Workshop. He is one of the contented people behind the *Sesame Street* Web site. William has been writing since he won a short story contest in the first grade and discovered that it was cool to be able to scare people. He attended the Clarion Workshop at Michigan State when he was 17, and his short fiction has since appeared in *F & SF* and *Science Fiction Age*. He is hard at work on a SF disaster novel called *Silvertide*, as well as a true memoir of his days as a Mormon missionary and international terrorist, tentatively called *The Boy Who Cried Bomb*. This is William's first appearance in *Realms*.

DENISE LEE just sold her first novel, which is awaiting publication. She also edits *Speculations*, a Hugo-nominated magazines for F/SF writers. Her short fiction has most recently appeared in the SFF.Net anthology, *Between the Darkness and the Fire*. When she's not writing and editing, she moonlights as a telephone advice R.N.

KATE RIEDEL was born and raised on a farm in Minnesota. She is now a card-carrying Canadian and lives in Toronto with on poet and two cats. His short fiction has appeared in *On Spec, Not One of Us*, and *Highlights for Children*. Current projects include a screenplay about Wyatt Earps sister-in-law and a novelette about a former *Hitler Jungend* who makes a proposal to an old aristocrat and gets more than he bargained for.

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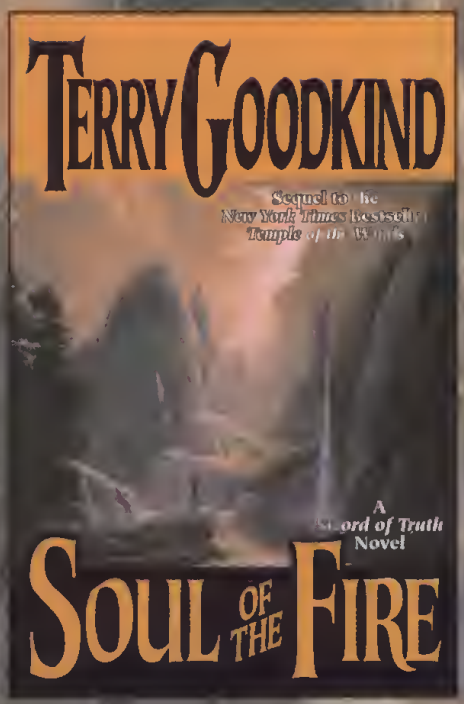
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